

## A CAPE-COD ROMANCE.

BY LOUISE DUPEE.

WE did not wish to know where we were going, but merely to go roving strange places and people for to see. And it is easy in New Denham to make an excursion in such wise, as every road, every hill, every marsh, every creek, every meadow is supplied with no end of names, and ideas of distance with New Denhamites are strangely at variance.

The proprietor of the hotel will recommend a drive to Green Lake, which he informs us is about three miles from the house. The clerk will suggest Great Pond, which is only four miles and a half away. The driver will propose Atwood's Pond, which he reckons about six miles from the meeting-house, which edifice is situated a full half-mile from the hotel. And you will be astonished to learn after a time that each one has the same place in his mind.

Marianne and I drove ourselves, and were happy. We met pink-bonneted strawberry-pickers on their way to the marshes where the smallest but also the sweetest berries were ripening in the sunshine. A delicious stream of bird-melody trickled though the woods which fringed the road on one side. Sails puffed out and sailed merrily away. Jolly yachtsmen were singing on the water.

"Which road shall we take, Marianne?" I asked, as we came to a fork where one road wound around the shore, and the other ran into the woods.

"It seems a pity to leave the sea," she said, "but we have never explored the woods road. Let us see where it leads to."

The trees brushed our carriage on either side. It was dark as the forests in the fairy tale. Soon, however, we emerged into the sunshine, and within sight of the sea again.

"Who knows but that we find Mrs. Pettigrew's white orchis in these woods," said Marianne. "You know she is very anxious to find some of these blooms to place beside the plate of her expected guest, the youthful rector of St. Paul's, because his tastes are

so delicate that he is unable to eat bread-and-butter pudding. Let us get out of the carriage, and go on a little exploring expedition."

We found the airiest and most delicate of ferns, the pinkest and dewiest of bindweed bells, and a few late anemones, but nothing that resembled orchis. So the spiritual young rector could be afforded no consolation for the homely Cape-Cod diet, unless a few wild-rose buds peeping through the green mist of the ferns might serve him instead of dessert.

We must have driven five miles at least, when, about two o'clock, we entered a little village not unlike that of New Denham. There was the inevitable white school-house with a funny little cupola on the top. The one or two ancient farmhouses, which look older than the hills themselves; the gray cottages, behind tangles of woodbine, with sea-shells around the flower-beds in the front yards, and green cages, with parrots in them, hanging in the front doors; the sprinkling of smart, new houses looking discontented and unhappy and out of place where everything else was so venerable, so softened by time and weather.

"But where is the hotel?" said Marianne, looking anxiously about her. "Visions of the dinner table blind my eyes to every other sight, however charming, and oh that I could hear the musical noise of a Cape-Cod waitress announcing, in plaintive tones, the bill of fare, boiled fish, baked fish, roast lamb."

"Here it is," I proclaimed joyfully, as, turning a little bend in the road, we came suddenly upon a real village scene.

There was the hotel, the usual square, white building with green blinds, the sign hanging from a tree, as well as being placed over the front door. It was called the Ocean House, though it stood in the one point where the ocean was not in sight, and as far away from the blue waves as one could pos-

sibly get in the village. The stage, a genuine old-fashioned affair, painted yellow, and very lofty in structure, was standing at the door, and quite an assemblage of persons, with the unmoved countenances peculiar to the region, were gathered on the piazza as well as on the steps of the village grocery, which contained the postoffice also.

The driver complimented the ladies, to whom he delivered sundry parcels of evident importance, cracked jokes with the men, and seemed to be regarded as a person of consequence. The postmaster stood holding his brown leather mail-bag in his hand, while he indulged in a little gossip with a new-comer.

"I knowed Cap'n Staples 'd git along soon, for I heerd from my son Rufus 't'other day, that the two brothers was pooty nigh into Rockville," said an old man in a sailor's jacket to an old woman, whose face was the very picture of curiosity.

"Well, he did n't come none too soon, she can't last long," replied the woman. "There she sits day after day, a countin' them idolatrous beads o' hern, and won't give the minister as much as a look when he comes over to talk with her 'bout her soul, as is his dooty. Sister Staples needs a good share of grace to sustain her a harborin' a heathen idolater under her roof. It's wus, too, seein' as she 's her own son's wife."

"Sartain she does," said the old man, casting an uneasy glance toward the piazza. "They say Aunt Lily upholds her in all her heathen nonsense, too, and fights the minister off when he 's talkin' jest as beautiful as a tract, coz she says he troubles the child. That makes it hard for sister Staples. Strange what the cap'n ever saw in her 't was so bewitchin'."

I followed the direction of the old man's glances, and discovered a decidedly strange looking couple sitting side by side at the farther end of the piazza. She was unmistakably an Italian girl, with large, velvety eyes, and hair blacker than black, falling carelessly about a beautiful but pitifully emaciated little olive-tinted face. Over a pale blue dress she wore a sort of mantle, of vivid scarlet, and in the lap, under the languid fingers, was a coil of beads and a crucifix.

He was a huge, hearty-looking young man, with bronzed face and brown whiskers, the very picture of a Yankee sailor, and gazed fondly and wistfully into her eyes, which seemed to see nothing, but were fixed on some far-away object.

"Here 's your romance, Marianne," said I. "Do you still long for your dinner, or have you forgotten all about such a trifling thing in the delight of this rich moment?"

"Her face is too sad; but I must know all about the mystery," said Marianne slowly,

as we lingered a moment in the doorway, having given our horse in charge of the youthful hostler, who, having been in the act of standing on his head on our arrival, reluctantly resumed an upright position for the purpose of serving us.

"If you 'd like some dinner, ladies, it's all ready, but is gitten' cold as fast as ken be," said a tall, angular maiden, in very short skirts, in a voice appropriately like a dinner-bell.

"Driver, what 's the use of my was-tin' my time gittin' up a good meal for you, when you allers let it spile a gossiping?" turning to the gallant stage-driver.

"I 'm coming right off, Viry," said he, throwing her a comical glance. "'T a n't likely I 'd lose my chance o' settin' down with the ladies' if I be a little dusty. They 'll excuse that, I know, seein' I 've been on the road since five this mornin'. Viry, how is that young man 't comes over from the Corner? A n't it about time he spoke? Don't see what he 's a thinkin' of, an' you 're growin' harndsomer and harndsomer every day. I 'd pick out some other feller ef I was you, now."

"Quit your nonsense, driver, Miss Staples is in the dinin'-room, and she 'll see to you," said this energetic damsel, bridling; and conducting us to the table, she made haste to introduce us to Miss Staples and two strange girls wantin' dinner.

Miss Staples was evidently the landlady. "Where 's the captin'?" He 's lettin' his dinner spile, too," replied the stage-driver, who applied himself assiduously to fried pork.

"Oh, he 's makin' his dinner on kissin'. He won't want no dinner beside that; that 's the way with those folks in love," replied Miss Viry, with a convulsive giggle.

"Sho! And he 's been married nigh a year, ha'n't he? Well, he 's been off on a long voyage, and 'ta n't to be wondered at that he thinks more of his wife than his dinner, just now."

"Every one to his taste, but I 'd rather be eatin' good vittles than to be kissin' some folks. I like white folks better 'n I do black ones, now!"

"Don't be spiteful just because John did n't want to marry you, and fell in love with her, Viry. John 's a good feller, a smart one, too, but there 's others left for a pooty girl to catch. Poor little soul! she can't live to trouble anybody long," said the driver, going off into a fit of meditation.

Miss Viry attended to an order for boiled fish, with snapping eyes and a very red face.

"Anybody that is fond o' heathen idolaters is welcome to marry 'em for all o' me," she muttered scornfully as she whisked out of the room.

"Don't, Viry; what will the strangers think?" said a pleasant-faced, motherly-looking old woman, who I decided at once must be the Aunt Lizy who "fought off the minister."

I whispered my suspicions to Marianne, who, I found, was just about to confide the same to me.

"Lou," said she calmly, "let us send our yellow chariot and our spirited steed back to the Atlantic House, and stay here all night?"

I was about to assent with the greatest satisfaction, when visions of Aunt Belle, with "large Hesper glittering on her tears," came over me with a sudden shock.

"Aunt Belle," I murmured, gazing plaintively at my bread-and-butter pudding.

"Oh, never mind Aunt Belle. She will weep a little, she will communicate a thousand fears and anxieties to Mrs. Pettigrew over the note which I shall send her, explaining our intentions, and then the two will go off into a lively discussion concerning dress, servants, or French cookery, and all will be over."

"Very well, then," said I. "Let us stay, by all means."

The captain presently appeared without his frail little wife, and commenced to eat his dinner in silence, notwithstanding the lively efforts of the stage-driver in the way of conversation.

Marianne and I stole back to the piazza, but the picturesque, pathetic little figure had vanished.

"If we could only inveigle ourselves into the good graces of Aunt Lizy, we might hear the whole story. I am sure that she is communicative by the looks of her face," said Marianne eagerly.

The stage-driver collected his stray "passengers," and drove away with a great clatter. The steps of the grocery and windows round about became deserted, and the little village went to sleep again. There was only the noise of the distant sea, the breeze rustling in the opposite cornfield, and the plaintive gobble of some young turkeys, which seemed to proceed from the back of the house.

The greenery looked most inviting in this direction, and we strolled around there to investigate. It was a real old-fashioned country back-yard, a green plot surrounded by currant-bushes and cherry-trees, and dotted with yellow mustard blossoms, which lent their own peculiar odor to the breezes; and under the kitchen windows were flowerbeds in which flourished white clover, its perfumed tassels drooping and heavy with bees, poppies, marigolds and various kinds of mint.

A flock of young turkeys under the anxious guidance of a motherly old hen, who

seemed to be afflicted with a melancholy too deep to be understood, was moving pensively homeward from the field just beyond, and on the doorsteps, to our great delight, sat Aunt Lizy, busily engaged in picking over green currants.

"They is dretful sour," she said, "but folks always want sarce, and everything to make sarce of is skurce this time of year. Strawberries a'n't very plenty yet. Do you like currant sarce? I hope so, for Marthy she's pestered about supper. Summer people is often so pertickler."

We assured her that we were by no means particular, and a pastoral diet of bread and milk was all we should ever desire.

"You a'n't much like the folks that boarded here last summer, then," said she, brightening. "There wa'n't nothin' in the world that they did n't call for, and when they got what they called for then they warn't satisfied. Some could n't live unless they had cheese on the table every meal, and others was sick to their stomachs if there was cheese in the room. Some was a pinin' away coz they could n't git enough lobster, and others had their appetites took away coz there was too much lobster. But then, I don't s'pose they were healthy, and ailln' folks a'n't to blame for their bein' dainty. Now there's poor little Tessar, my nephew's wife, she can't swallow what we rugged folks do, and try my best, I can't very often hit her appetite; when I do, she don't eat no more than you could carry to her on a rose-leaf; and it's dretful tryin'."

"Oh, I think I saw her sitting on the piazza when we came in this noon; what a lovely little thing she is with her great, dark eyes and pure olive skin. She looks like an Italian girl," said Marianne. "I saw her sisters sitting under the chestnut-trees among the Appenines."

"Don't tell!" exclaimed Aunt Lizy, "she has got three or four sisters to home, and would jump out of her skin to hear from 'em!"

Marianne was obliged to explain, looking rather foolish.

"Marthy, she's dretful ashamed on her bein' she's a furriner, and so black-complected. And she's got it into her head that her bein' a Roman Catholic is bringin' a curse to the house, and wants the poor child's beads and little image of the Virgin took away from her, an' that would kill her, I know it would. They're all the comfort she has now. But then, Marthy's set on by all the silly women in this village, and the minister into the bargain; an' between 'em all, an' pity for the innocent child, I'm a most crazy, myself. Now John has come home, there 'll be different doin's, though. They won't one of 'em dare to open their mouths when he's round. He's so fond of

Tessa, poor fellow, he won't let her be crossed in anything, even if she should want to swallow Blessed Virgins."

"I cannot wonder that he is fond of her: she is very lovely. I fell in love with her the moment I saw her," said I enthusiastically.

Aunt Lizy seemed much gratified at this, and, after a little time, became moved to tell us her story, which, as yet, she declared she "had never told a livin' soul," and not even John himself knew the whole.

"You see John, he's cap'n of the *Three Brothers*," she began, "the best brig that ever sailed from the Cape. He's the smartest one in the family, John is, and a good, honest, generous soul, as ever breathed. All the girls around here has bin a settin' their caps for him, and Marthy, that's his mother, was jest determined he should marry Jane Woods. Deacon Woods, her father, has got more property than any man round here for miles and miles, and then Jane's aunt left her a good stock of bed-blankets and other house-keepin' things, an' she's master industrious, too, 'n' a good manager. Besides this she's what most folks call a beauty, with cheeks as red as roses, 'n' snappin' black eyes. But lor'! John did n't take to her at all, nor to any of the other girls, any more 'n' to wish 'em all well, 'n' joke with 'em a little now 'n' then.

"But Marthy, she had n't given up all hopes, an' was forever plannin' to bring 'em together, till all of a sudden he comes home last fall and introduced this little brown Tessa as his wife. Marthy, she came near faintin' at the first glance, and I must say I was considerable took aback when I found she could n't speak hardly anything but her heathen Italian, and was a Roman Catholic, too, a countin' her beads and a kissin' her pewter Virgins. But I set great store by her now, she's such a patient, lovin' little soul, 'n' as for her religion, it's what she was brought up to, and the Lord he looks at the heart, not on outward symbols. I can't blame her so much for not carin' about John, neither, seein' as she liked somebody else 'fore she ever set eyes on him, 'n' if that somebody else can't hold a candle to John, no how, she's a dyin' for him, 'n' love will go where it's sent.

"You see he was sick in Florence a year ago last spring, and took lodgin's of Tessa's mother just outside the city. And Tessa, with long gold ear-rings in her ears, red posies in her hair, and that sort o' wishful look in them great eyes o' hern, waited on him; and for all he was so sorter offish to wimmin natural, he fell in love with her right straight off, and, as soon as he got well, up 'n' asked her to marry him. At first she said no, 'n' for a long time she said

no. But John, when he sets his heart on anything, is as persistent as rain when there's a County Conference; and finally she give in, and John, poor feller, thought 't was because she had grown to think more on him, 'n' congratulated hisself on bein' a master one for coaxin'. But the facts in the case was this:—

"It seems that an American sketchman" (we wondered what a sketchman was, but soon found out that she meant an artist) "lodged there the year before, 'n' made her think the moon was made o' green cheese, with his pooty love-makin' 'n' yaller whiskers. He boarded one summer in this very house; strange, a'n't it? 'n' that poor little soul, though she knows jest as well as I do that he is a scamp 'n' a fool, takes comfort in havin' the same room as he had, 'n' asks me which window he used to set to most, 'n' if I'm sure that she has the very chair he used to set in.

"He told her he loved her more 'n' any girl he ever see, 'n' made a picter on her, 'n' told her what pooty eyes she had, 'n' wrote billets to her that was enough to make a dog sick with their soft nonsense. The poor girl, she really liked him with all her heart, bleeved every word he said, and was up in the seventh heaven over it, and was beginnin' to think about her weddin' cloes, when he up 'n' left her, 'n' she never heard nothin' more from him till she heard through another sketchman, a friend of his, that he was married to a rich Amerikin lady 't he'd been engaged to for years.

"Sence then she's bin ailin' all the time, growin' gradually wus, 'n' the doctor says she's got consumption; but, lor'! 't a'n't nothin' but a broken heart 't ails her. They don't have that sort of disease round here, much. If a girl gits the mitten, she's up 'n' away for another beau 't's got more property or is better lookin' than the fust, so's 't plague him 'n' make folks hold their tongues. But I have known such cases long ago, 'n' if I could stop I'd tell you about Phebe Ann Miller, a great chum o' mine, when I was young, 't was foolish enough to die jest as little Tessa is a dyin'.

"But goin' on with my story 'bout Tessa. She'd jest heard 'bout his gittin' married when John appeared, 'n' nothin' 'd ever in-dooed her to marry him if he had n't happened to say somethin' or nuther 'bout New Denham one day. Then Tessa's eyes began to sparkle, 'n' her breath come real quick, 'n' she asked jest as eager as could be,—

"Is it in Ameriky? Is New Denham in Ameriky? 'n' do you live there? Is it your home?"

"And John, kinder surprised, says,—

"Why, yes, little girl, I live there when I'm to home, but there's a good many New

Denhams in Ameriky, I guess. What do you know 'bout the place, any ways ?'

"Her countenance kinder fell for a minit, then she run 'n' fetched a picter that this raskil of a sketchman 'd given her 'coz 't was a scene in the place where he spent his summers (he used to spend 'em here a spell ago), 'n' though 't is a miserable daub, John knew it right off as the bridge here b'low the school-house, 'n' the field 'n' the willow-trees 'n' the sea to the distance.

"I 've seen it, 'n' I should 'a' knowed it myself, though the blessed fields warn't never that color, nor never sot under such streaked clouds. He told me once that he painted in the crow [Corot] style, 'n' I should think it was crows' work or somethin' of the kind. Then Tessa she began to cry, 'n' the next day she told him she was ready to merry him 'n' go to Ameriky with him in his ship, if he was still a mind to take her.

"'T wa' n't hardly fair on John, seein' 's 't was all through likin' another feller 't she consented, but if she 'd told him all about it, I 've no doubt he 'd bin glad to 'a' got her at that rate, even. Not but what he 's got sperit enough, generally, but he was so deep in love with her 't he 'd 'a' taken her all the same if he 'd 'a' know'd her object was to murder him.

"He don't know nothin' 'bout the other feller to this day, nor nobody else but me. The poor little soul she just opened her whole heart to me one day, 'n' not for all the gold in Californy would I have the folks round here git hold of it. Marthy she 'd be harder on her than ever.

"You see all Tessa wanted was to see this scoundrel of a sketchman once more. She said she thought she could die easy if she only jest set her two eyes on him once agin, an' that she has done, poor lamb. He don't come here no more, 'coz 't a'n't fashionable enough for his wife, I s'pose, but Tessa found out some way that he was to the Port this summer, she has learnt to read English amazin' quick, 'n' I took her down last week, 'n' ever since then she has

seemed more quiet and resigned like; she was dretful res'less 'n' oneasy afore."

"Did he recognize her when they met?" asked Marianne, clasping her hands in nervous sympathy.

"Not at fust, but when it did come over him who she was, he looked as if he 'd been shot or struck some awful blow. She, bless her little heart, was jest as calm as could be, only she looked more pitiful 'n ever out o' them great eyes o' hern.

"I left 'em alone together, 'n' I ha' n't never asked her what he said, 'coz I know if she wanted me to know she 'd tell me. I'm glad John come jest as he did, for she can't last long, 'n' 't would 'a' killed him to come home and find her gone.

"She 's been a longin' to see him once more, too. She 's a grateful, conscientious little soul as ever lived, 'n' jest as much of a Christian, I verily believe, as if she was a real strict Baptist. She'll tell"—

"Lizy, Lizy! A'n't you never a goin' to git through with them currants? You was a goin' to toss up some feather cakes for supper, you know," called a shrill voice from the window.

"Bless me! I forgot," said Aunt Lizy, hurriedly picking up her dishes. "You must excuse me, young ladies; I must go in now, but I hope to see you agin some day or other."

We did not catch another glimpse of poor little Tessa. She was very weak, they said, with the excitement of her husband's arrival. But we grew to be warm friends with Aunt Lizy, and promised to visit her again in the future. The next morning the boy drove us home to Aunt Belle, who was scandalized over our escapade, and welcomed us with tearful reproaches.

"Is nature so beautiful at New Denham Corner, or did you find your romance?" questioned Mrs. Pettigrew, who was adorned with white lilies and rejoicing in the society of the dainty young rector.

But we were not disposed to be communicative then.

## A HOG-HUNT IN HONDURAS.

BY ARCHER.

In the forests of Central America are found large droves of wild hogs, which, though none other than the domestic species run wild, are by no means the pleasantest objects encountered by the wayfarer, particularly if accompanied by dogs, to which they seem especially inimicable. The "Warees," as they are called to distinguish them from the native swine or peccaries, have, with their reversion to the feral state, seemingly acquired all the ferocity, cunning, and general devilishness of their European ancestors, the wild boars; and, since their introduction by the Spanish conquerors, owing to an abundance of food and favorable climate, have multiplied so rapidly as to fairly overrun the jungle-like forests of Central America, and consequently the natives are forced, in order to preserve their little gardens and plantations, to constantly wage war against them; such labor, however, being rewarded by a constant and never-failing supply of the most excellent pork.

During the year 1854 it was my good fortune to become the guest of one Senor Badaj-r, a Cuban, who in an attempt to retrieve a fortune shattered by political expatriation, and confiscation of his Antillian estates, had settled in Honduras and formed a plantation near the town of Yuscara. Trained up by a father who had emigrated from the "Land of the Vine and Olive" in middle life, he had not sunk into that apathy and indolence so characteristic of Spanish Americans and Creoles, his estates giving evidence of energy and prudence, and an extensive, well-studied library of books in many languages, of a well-stored and cultivated mind.

On presenting letters of introduction to this gentleman from correspondents in Boston, he at once, with that hospitality peculiar to the Creole race, insisted upon making his house my home during the few months I purposed remaining in the country; which, of course, was gratefully accepted. And during my stay, Senor Badaj-r was constantly planning excursions by field and forest for my benefit; the most

notable of which, perhaps, took place the week following my arrival.

Long before dawn of the morning in question, found us in the saddle, and riding through a lofty forest which cast almost total darkness upon the rocky bridle-path. For an hour we pursued our way, lighted only by the fireflies which still flittered to and fro, among which the brilliant lamp-like *cucufe* was most conspicuous. Suddenly emerging into a broad, grassy dell, around which the forest stood like a black border, and along whose bottom a beautiful rivulet wandered between clumps of orange and fragrant fruit-trees, our ears were saluted by bursts of melody from a dozen gushing throats, sending up matins to the burning stars of the pure sky.

"Those are the *Ruisenores*, as we call them," said Badajar; "but I have heard my father say they are not the same birds as at home." (By the Creoles, Spain is always referred to as home, though they may never have visited its shores.) "But listen to the *Guilaguitas*!"

Numbers of voices, uttering in rapid succession the syllables that form the name, suddenly filled the air, varied at intervals by a hoarse booming note, not unlike the bellow of a bull.

"We always consider these birds as a token of daybreak, for they scream in this way only just before the morning twilight, or immediately after nightfall. But there is another sign: the Southern Cross has begun to fall."

The morning land-breeze now freshened and came down the gullies in gusts from the mountains, cold enough to make us quicken our horses, yet laden with the fragrance of a thousand flowers that yielded their perfume most freely to the dews of night. But it was night no more: for a single slender pencil of rosy light suddenly shot from the eastern mountain brow to the zenith, as distinct as if an orifice had been opened in the sky; and, quick as thought, other rays diverged from the same point darting across the heavens, till the whole vault, even to its western quarter, resem-

bled a vast fan of pale crimson radiance. Now the *Pipiri* from the crown of a neighboring palm saluted the dawn with his shrill cry of "*pipi-pipi-pi-roo*," the clarion of the cock and clack of the *pentado* arose from some negro hut within the forest, doves moaned plaintively from the river-side, the *Aui* began to call from the fruit trees, and the *Chinching* to imitate with metallic voice the smittings of the smith upon his anvil. Daylight had come, and Nature was awake and dressed.

Toward the end of the valley, we now described a scattered *villorio* or hamlet of low straggling huts, from which, as we drew nearer, rose the hum of many confused sounds. Riding through the *plaza* in front of the hovels,—there was nothing that could be called a street,—we suddenly drew rein before a dwelling somewhat more pretentious than the rest in possessing white-washed walls and a broad veranda.

"Here," said my companion as he sprang out of the saddle, "we will breakfast, as Padre Tomasso expects us: he is a keen sportsman, a capital shot, and a good feeder; and, I expect, will join us."

As we approached, the good father was seen through the door in a hammock busily occupied in manufacturing and smoking *cigaritos*.

"*Buenas dias, Padre Tomasso! como las pas usted?*"

Up jumped the worthy friar, and holding out both hands returned the salutation.

"*Vaya!* and is it my excellent friend Senor Badajar? Welcome, welcome! and welcome to the gentleman who accompanies you. Well, but you are up early for the sport."

"Truly, Padre, we are early. As my Yankee friend says, 'the early worm catches the bird.' But this is Senor Archimbal, eminent in physic and"—

"Now, senor, I protest!"

"Never mind: eminent in physic and wisdom, who has taken the trouble to visit our poor country to learn our ways, and kill our game."

"Most excellent senor," replied the priest as he shook both my hands heartily. "I rejoice to make your acquaintance. But my poor breakfast waits, senores. *Paquita, sirve el almuerzo!*"

"Poor breakfast," indeed! may I enjoy many such. The grilled wild pork was tender and game flavored, the wild pigeons had

acquired an aromatic sapidity from feeding on the pimento berries, and the great ignana lizard possessed all the delicacy and whiteness of spring chicken,—as, indeed, I thought it was at the time. Chocolate colored with anatto and perfumed with vanilla, freshly gathered fruits cool in the morning air and full of luscious sweetness as tropical fruits only are, served to whet rather than satisfy the appetite. The *aquacate* dipped in gravy and eaten with salt and pepper melted like marrow on the palate; the roasted plantain smoked on the dish; the *guanabana*, a fruit nearly as large as one's head, was eaten with spoons like custard out of its leathery rind; juicy oranges, russet *nisperos* of sugary sweetness, fragrant pineapples, and other noble fruits were heaped on the table in profusion; and to cap all, the meal was finished with a delicate *dulce* of the crimson *guayabo*.

After *benedicite* had been pronounced, and the olive damsel with kerchiefed head had removed the scattered remnants of the feast, the good Padre slyly drew from his closet a black antique bottle, and with a twinkle of his little gray eyes placed it on the table, adroitly flanking it with glasses. "*Vaya!*" said he: "if it is a feast, let it be a feast! let us wash down the fruit with a glass of *ron*. *A la salud de ustedes, senores!*" and a rummer of Mr. Stiggins's "partickeler wanity" flowed easily down his throat to keep the fruits company.

The priest's mule having been caught and saddled, he himself appeared bearing an old-fashioned single-barreled fowling-piece, long enough for a fishing rod, flint-locked and silver mounted, yet in its brightness and cleanliness bearing marks of frequent use, while over his black cassock was slung a massive bullock horn filled with powder, and a leathern shot-pouch.

As we rode along the sun was fast climbing the eastern sky and poured down his torrid beams unmitigated by a breath of air,—for the land wind had died away, and the sea breeze not yet risen. As soon, therefore, as we found ourselves in the open, away from the trees, the heat became so intense as to be almost overpowering. The poor little priest, nearly as broad as he was tall, quickly gave evidences of suffering, fanning himself with his broad shovel hat till his arms ached in their sockets, except when the scorching of his bald pate caused it to be restored for a few seconds to

its proper resting-place. He presented a truly laughable picture, as puffing and blowing he divided his time between attempts to raise a breeze and in spurring his wheezing, asthmatic, and plethoric mule into a shambling trot, a gait she had evidently long since forgotten, in order to keep pace with our fast-walking horses. At last he sued for a truce. "*Tente! Tente!* cease your laughing, you anatomical scarecrows! oh, but I am melting!" he cried dolefully; "presently you will see nothing but a mass of melted grease running down Marmita's sides, instead of *un pobre heremito*. *Sancta Maria!* what would not I give to be as fleshless as yourselves."

"Why Padre, you are as bad as Sydney Smith?"

"And why was he?"

"A priest like yourself, who said that could he only lay off his flesh and sit in his bones he would be happy."

"Indeed! but that would be happiness were he as fat as myself. *Jesu!* but it is hot. Sit in his bones! *Purissima Maria!* if I only could. Let us get into the shade as soon as possible and taste my elixir."

All things have an end, and so at last had the scorching heat. A short ride sufficed to take us well up the mountain where was felt the first zephyrs of the much-longed-for sea-breeze, and we drew up in the shade of a broad palm to enjoy it and view the beautiful panorama that lay mapped out before us. Out came the priest's bottle; and as we stood drinking the refreshing *vino tinto*, none other than the fresh juice of the grape, pressed that morning, a horseman mounted on a most magnificent black steed appeared in view, and was rapidly dashing by, when he was hailed by Padre Tomasso, whose sacristan the rider ultimately proved to be. He was a young and fine-looking mulatto, tall and straight as an arrow, presenting a curious appearance in his outfit of mingled poverty and wealth. A tattered crownless Panama capped his woolly locks, and a pair of blue cotton drawers, and shirt of the same, both much the worse for wear, constituted his entire clothing; but the horse which he bestrode bore a jaguar-skin shaped to his back as a saddle, while the bit and chain by which it was guided, as well as the ornaments of the headstall, were of massive silver. His dexter heel, guiltless of other covering, bore an enormous span of the same metal, with a rowel as large as a

tea saucer, and three tinkling little bells; while from his side dangled a heavy sabre.

"*Tente! Tente! Poco a poco!* Is it life or death with you, Juan? or are you for the hunt?"

"Ho! is that you, holy father? and you too, *Senor Badajar?* For the hunt of course: are you not going?"

"Certainly; but I have a *caballero* here who desires to win his first boar's tusks to-day, and then watch the jerking of the pork at Romero's *conaco* tonight. The Padre must have some wine left in that bottle, so moisten your throat."

"Ah! gossips and frogs drink and talk: so I must fain do the same. *Salud: Padre, salud senores.* Now let us be moving."

The war had already begun as we drew rein at the rendezvous and eagerly seized our guns from the hands of the peons. Badajar had sent on before us; and the confused noises that resounded through the forests soon led us to the scene of activity. Here we found a crowd of stout fellows of all colors, from the white of pure blood through various grades and mixtures of races to the coal black Coramantee and copper-colored Poyais, which were scattered hither and thither, some armed with *machettes*, some with old swords and heavy hunting knives, and others with dilapidated muskets, while a supply of long, broad-bladed lances had been provided for those who were weaponless or preferred such to their own arms. Dogs, too, were here of innumerable sizes, shapes, and breeds, and of no breed whatever. Here were the magnificent blood-hounds of my host, whose pendulous muzzle, stern, noble expressions and deep voices proved them the very aristocracy of canine flesh; there a half-breed mastiff; a couple of terriers; and last, a score or more of mongrels; all eager and open-mouthed, presenting as much diversity of appearance as their masters, yet all sufficiently true for the work at hand.

Plunging into the forest, the dogs were loosed, and the sport began. Game was by no means scarce; for hundreds of wild swine were roaming hither and thither among the lofty palms, feeding upon the fallen nuts and abundant insect life. Soon herds were seen, which, alarmed at the sounds of pursuit, yet not knowing whither to turn, scampered to and fro among the trees, grunting and squealing, each family headed by its own patriarchal boar.



Suddenly we are in the midst of an exciting scene. Shouts, *carrambas*, oaths of all kinds, rend the air, mingled with the barking of dogs, squealing of pigs, champing of boar-tusks, and screams of rage and pain from the wounded. In this little open space a large herd had been driven by the dogs; and, surrounded by excited men, they know not which way to turn. Half a dozen curs single out a young, well-tusked boar, and eagerly pursue him. When about to be overtaken, he wheels suddenly, and rushes to the shelter of a gigantic tree, in the angle of whose enormous root-spurs he ensconces himself with great coolness and judgment, instantly facing his foes. The foremost of the dogs foolishly rushes in upon him, when, with a forward step and a short upward stroke of the muzzle, the wretched canine is flung back in agony upon the green-sward, with protruding bowels. Others bark and snap; but, rendered cautious by the lesson just received, they remain at a safe distance, until Padre Tomasso, hurrying up, sends a shower of bullets through the broad neck of the foe.

In another place, a half-savage negro falls on a boar which the dogs have pinned by the ears, and dexterously slits its weasand with his huge knife, when his face lights up with a half-demoniacal expression of mingled glee and satisfaction.

Badajar's double-barrel brings a pig with each discharge, while the broad blades of the lances are constantly red with porcine gore. Many of the personal encounters were full of danger, and many severe cuts were sustained from the sharp, projecting tusks of the boars, and even the sows would bite wickedly in their attempts to defend their young. Many individuals made a furious defence, breaking through the crowd of surrounding dogs to attack their masters, whom they seemed sagaciously to regard as the originators of their terrible misfortunes.

Various and wild were the sounds that echoed through the forest. Calls for help under the pressure of a too furious boar, savage imprecations at the escape of a victim, the growl of rage and disappointment when a well-aimed stroke was evaded, cries of pain under severe wounds, shouts of direction, of admonition, and of instruction passing from one to another; all of which, mingled with the yelps and howls of the dogs, and squeals and grunts of the swine,

made a pandemonium of sound that was almost deafening.

"*Tente! tente! jubalina prenada!*" growls a surly old darky, with a furious oath, to a youth who was about to end the existence of a gravid sow the dogs had overpowered. "Let her go, you fool! would you destroy the hope of the breed?"

"*Estes alerta!*" shouted Juan, with sharp brevity, as I dropped my gun, preparatory to reloading, after knocking over a couple of pigs.

Wheeling quickly at the alarm, another *verraco* was seen rushing toward me, whose little red eyes, no less than his champing tusks which tossed off the adhesive foam like flakes of snow about his brindled hide, spoke of danger imminent and intense.

There was no time to run, no time to load, no weapon to meet the peril; when suddenly the priest's little cur—how I thanked the Fates that the attempts of his master to keep him at home had been all in vain!—sprang with a bound in front of the boar, and received the brunt of the attack. The infuriated animal's tusks ripped open the flank of the brave little dog, and laid him bleeding upon the sward. But his timely intervention proved my safety; as, the next instant, Juan, who had rushed to my assistance as he uttered the alarm, buried the heavy blade of his spear between the fore-shoulder and the neck of the ferocious brute, which instantly sank quivering to the earth, even with his last gasp trying in his rage to bite the handle of the weapon that pinned him to the earth.

At length the decline of the sun warned us that the day was waning, and the signal was given to end the slaughter, when the carcasses were gathered. The game was speedily disemboweled; and the offal, with the heads and feet, fell as the first fruits, under the rule of forest law, to our dumb companions, as a tribute to their valuable aid, while the remainder was quickly flayed, cut up, and then packed in sacks formed of the hides for transportation to the *conaco* in the valley.

"Come, Padre; come, Senor Archimbalt, — let us mount, and be off," said Badajar as Pepe brought up the horses. "Pepe?" he continued, addressing that important personage.

"Si, si, senor."

"Couple the hounds, and take them over to Senor Romero's estancia for the night,

and lead them home in the morning. Now let us be off."

Toilsome was the journey to the hunters already foot-sore and weary with the exertions of the day, and now obliged to carry a heavy load for several miles through a tangled and almost pathless forest; ever stumbling over roots and rocks, their feet catching in the loops of tangled vegetation that obstructed the way, or striking the sharp, thorny briars which ever and anon gashed their faces. Now the excitement of the hunt had passed away, many grumbled and swore over their loads, and, with the peculiar enervation of the mixed Spanish races, would now and again throw off their loads, and dash themselves to the earth, bewailing their hard lot with strong contortions of muscle, and the furious energy of rage, engendered by a tropical clime, forgetting, in the puerile inappropriateness of their fury, that the occasion had been of their own voluntary asking, and vowing, with many imprecations, that their burdens should never be lifted again, only in the end to once more raise them, and resume the toilsome march.

Spurring past these poor, disconsolate devils, we soon reach the valley, where the guards detailed for the duty early in the day had erected a capacious hut or *ajoupa* by driving stout stakes into the ground, wattleing the interstices with green withes, basket-fashion, and covering the whole with a thatched roof of palm-leaves.

Provisions of various kinds were preparing for the hunters. Yams, sweet potatoes, cocoas, and plaintains were roasting; *tortillas* were baking; onions, garlic, celery, and other herbs, along with the mucilaginous *okro*, the tomato, the hot *chile* and *aji* and spicy *pimenta* were boiling to make a huge *olla podrida*; and a vast pile of fruits lay heaped in a corner of the hut, beside which were ranged many jars and flasks of *aguardiente* or *chinguirito*.

A number of forked stakes, ranged in fours some six feet apart, were stuck in the ground, across which poles were laid to dry

the meat. Other frames, on a like though smaller scale, had the fires already kindled under them, in order to provide good beds of coals over which to grill the pork for the evening meal, this being done by forming an impromptu gridiron on the frames by means of green rods.

Soon the hunters began to drop in by ones and twos, — each, as he arrived, throwing down his load with execrations and curses varying in depth and intensity according to individual temperament; then, seizing a flask of *aguardiente*, a huge draught would be swallowed, when, temper recovered, he would lie at full length upon the sward, and fall to making and smoking the inevitable cigaritos.

The *guardas* seize a couple of small hogs, and, splitting each in two, set the rods, and grill them in a most appetizing manner. Slices are thrown on the coals, and quickly broiled. All gather round, forgetting alike their weariness and their vows; and soon, under the influence of a full stomach and the stimulating liquors, they become vociferous, chattering like so many magpies. The prowess of the pigs, the dogs, and the hunters is affirmed with many boastful enlargements and huge oaths. Nothing but braggadocia is heard as they prepare the meat for jerking, deftly cutting up the carcasses, and removing the bones. The flesh is gashed on the inside, and the cuts filled with salt and a mixture of pimenta and pepper, when it is suspended over fires of green wood to be smoked, after which they are packed in leaves. Other portions are reserved to be dried in the sun, for which purpose some of the party remain at the *canaco* for several days.

At last, when the moon is high toward the zenith, the jovial hunters betake themselves to rest, with no other covering than their *serapes*; and soon all is silent except for the low voices of a group of card-players, gathered around the central fire, whose duty it is to watch the smoking fires, and guard the meat from vermin or from the prowling *zibaro*.

## A LEAF FROM MY LIFE.

BY EMMA J. WHITNEY.

When I was fifteen my father died, and I was left to the tender mercies of a guardian.

My brother, five years my senior, was at college at the time of our father's death, for it came suddenly, at the last, as all such events usually do. He would have left college at once, but father thought of that, as he did of everything for our welfare, and, much against his will, Reginald was obliged to return to his neglected studies.

"My darling," said my father, tenderly, a little before his death, "you are fortunately firm, and not easily swayed. Would to heaven your brother was like you! Promise me that you will remember and obey my dying words, Ethel."

"I promise, solemnly, dear papa," I sobbed passionately.

"Hush, hush, dear! do not grieve so! I am glad, so glad to go," he murmured faintly. "When Reginald squanders his inheritance, as I fear he will, do not give

him yours. I have refused him assistance, and counseled him all to no purpose. He will not come into full possession of his property before he is twenty-five, unless he marries. I can trust you, dear child, and I leave Reginald to your loving care; and I leave you both in the Father's tender hands, knowing he will not forsake, but lead you by 'the side of the soft flowing waters in the green pastures' of his love."

He was so pale and weak I begged him to say no more. But he only smiled gently, and went on in a low tone, —

"I must say a few words before I go, and I hear sweet strains of music, even now," drawing my face down to his. "I think Alston is an honorable man, but look over his accounts each year, and keep a strict account of your expenses, and you cannot be wronged. You will have plenty of wealth, and will be much sought after, and admired, for you are very beautiful; but I warn you not to heed their flatteries, but

know it is true worth, not gold or rank, that makes us."

How often in the future his solemn words rang in my ears, and kept me from the dangers of my position!

With my hands clasped in his, and my tear-stained cheek pressed to his breast, he remained silent for a long time.

"Ethel, my darling, where are you?" he asked suddenly.

"I am here, papa," kissing him softly.

A heavenly smile illumined his face, as he said in clear tones, —

"I have seen your future, my child, and although a portion of the way is dark and thorny, you will come at last to the brightness of the perfect day. Let this comfort you, that you will save your brother."

Reginald was quite shocked at being absent when papa died, and I was hopeful that it would have a lasting effect on his volatile nature. I was doomed to disappointment, however, for in a few days his gravity wore off, and he was the same easy, careless brother I had always known.

Mr. Alston (our guardian) came to the funeral, and as soon as possible took me home with him. When I was a child I was rather remarkable for my knowledge of character, and the moment I looked at Mr. Alston's cold, gray eyes, narrow forehead, and pointed chin, I cordially disliked him. He was lavish in compliments and suave speeches, and wore a continual smirk on his hard face, and Reginald was won at once.

"Fine old gentleman!" said he, in the free-and-easy way that irritated me exceedingly. "You are in luck as usual, Ethel. Catch me going back to those musty, dusty books and teachers, if it was n't for losing a nice slice of property. It's a blamed shame to have the governor cut up such a shine!"

"Reginald Livingston," I cried sternly, "how dare you talk so?"

"Heigho, how fiery we are!" he exclaimed mockingly, then added, hastily, as the tears sprang to my eyes, "I did n't mean any harm, little sister, but you always take a fellow up so. If you had such cross old curmudgeons for teachers, I guess you would hate 'em as bad as I do."

"Good-by, Reginald," I said chokingly, as my guardian entered the apartment. "I shall expect to hear from you soon."

"Of course you will, you silly child!" kissing me reluctantly. "I am glad you

are going away, it's so awful dull here. There, there, don't cry any more, sis; your pretty face is frightfully red and swollen. Girls are such cry-babies!" fretfully.

Poor boy! he little knew how his careless words pierced my heart. With a slight nod, he took his seat in the carriage that was to convey him to the depot, and drove rapidly away.

"O my brother!" I thought, a trifle bitterly, "it is useless to go to you for comfort or counsel."

My journey was without incident.

"You will like the Grange, my dear," said Mr. Alston, as we entered the carriage that met us at the station.

"Stop a moment, John," said he, as we ascended a steep hill. "There, look at that large building, something in the English style," pointing eastward.

I looked as directed, and saw a large, imposing structure. A wide avenue, lined with patriarchs of the forest, led to it, and a grove of cedars and maples lay at the back. The flourishing town was a little at one side, and far away the meadows and uplands were covered with grass and grain, the sunny cloud-shades running over the golden-bearded wheat like white-winged birds, and I involuntarily exclaimed, —

"Oh, it is beautiful, beautiful!"

A grateful smile wreathed my guardian's lips as he ordered the coachman to drive on.

As we rolled up the shaded avenue, I saw a splendid flower-garden lay in front of the house. Statues peeped here and there amid the green, and a silvery fountain tossed its crystal spray in sparkling drops, as it rippled merrily.

My heart beat heavily, and there was a mist before my eyes, as I was ushered into the room containing my guardian's family.

Mrs. Alston, a tall, stately woman, with light blue eyes, and yellow hair, greeted me coolly, and her three daughters stared calmly at my pale face, and eyes dim and swollen with weeping.

Ida, the eldest of the family, was a beautiful blonde. Her features were small, delicate and haughty in expression; her figure was of medium height, slender and willowy.

A son was next in age, called Herbert, who was absent at my arrival.

Bella, was a rich brunette, with arch dimples hiding in the rich bloom of her cheeks.

Her figure was not so delicate as her sister's; but her air was haughty, as if conscious of her power.

Richard was next. He was a manly counterpart of Bella. Lottie, the youngest (two years my senior), was not in the least like the others. Not so beautiful, perhaps, but piquant and coquettish.

I scanned them closely, and soon came to the conclusion that I could never trust, or be friends, with my guardian's family.

"Where is Herbert?" inquired Mr. Alston suddenly.

"Gone to Lewiston," responded Lottie.

Richard's bold black eyes scarcely left my face, and it was with intense satisfaction that I was ushered to my room. That night I sobbed myself to sleep.

"*Veni, vidi, vici,*" laughed a strange voice, as I went down to the breakfast-room next morning.

"None of your confounded Latin, or interference, either," growled Richard.

I opened the door hastily. There was a momentary confusion as I entered. Lottie met me with a kiss, presented me to Herbert (who had arrived late the night before), and gave me a seat next her at the table.

Herbert was tall, perfectly formed, with a gentlemanly air. His mustache, beard and hair were a rich, golden brown, and his eyes deeply blue.

"The handsomest man I ever saw," I thought involuntarily.

Child as I was, I could but see Richard's fancy for me, and his blind jealousy of his brother, and it was with the utmost relief that I took my departure to school.

Lottie accompanied me, and in three weeks from my father's death, I was a member of Madame Morelle's celebrated school for young ladies.

Madame's nephew, Alphonse Morelle, was a frequent visitor of his aunt's, and the admired hero of the girls. Lottie attracted him at once by her piquant sallies, and arch, coquettish ways.

I wrote to Reginald several times, but the weeks sped away without bringing me an answer. Vacation came, and the first person I saw at my guardian's was my brother.

"I am not very well," he replied, to my anxious inquiries, "and thought I would run up and see you."

"You have not written me, even once, and I have been very anxious about you."

"It was a bore to write when I was com-

ing so soon," he answered carelessly. "What a run of luck you have, Ethel!"

"You and I are all alone, Regie."

"Are you lonesome, little sister?" tenderly: "our school-days will soon be over, I hope, and then we will keep house together, until some one steals my pet," carelessly smoothing my hair.

The tears sprang to my eyes at his tender tone, and my voice trembled as I answered gayly, —

"It will be a long time before that takes place."

To my secret dissatisfaction I saw Reginald was smitten with Bella's bright eyes. The vacation was soon over and we were back at Madame Morelle's.

My mother left me all her jewelry, except a heavy diamond ring to my brother, saying, in her sweet, tender voice, —

"Reginald's wife would only think of their costliness, but Ethel will prize them because her mother wore them once."

Papa had kept them sacredly, giving them into my care a few days before he was summoned to join the wife he loved so well.

Lottie took a great fancy to a set of pearls, teasing me continually for them.

"It will be a long time before you can wear them," she said, "and you will not miss the money for a dozen just such sets."

"It is not because of their worth, Lottie," I replied, "but because they were my sainted mother's."

"Fiddlesticks!" contemptuously. "You might let me wear them, then. Come, now, that's a darling, let me keep them a while."

I shook my head.

"I will neither give nor lend anything that was my mother's."

"You say that just so I may say no more," she sneered maliciously. "Here you have an abundance of splendid jewelry, and I have none to speak of, and of pinchbeck at that, and it's just as provoking as can be! How stingy rich folks are!" sweeping from the room, and slamming the door behind her.

Well, I gave her a handsome set of coral at Christmas, and she seemed delighted, begging pardon for her hasty speech.

I went home with her for the holidays, as Reginald was to be there. The house was full of company, and the parlor was a picture of beauty and happiness.

Reginald — fickle as the summer wind — forsook Bella for a Miss Vaughn, a lovely

coquette, whom the gentlemen adored, and the ladies disliked. Bella, jealous and angry, flirted desperately with a young lawyer and a silly old man. My first peep at society was anything but pleasant to me.

"You are in deuced luck as usual, Ethel," said Reginald, the day before Christmas. "Dick loves you to distraction; he's a bit wild now, but he'll sober down when he marries, I dare say."

My cheeks flushed hotly.

"Reginald!"

"Ha, ha! what a little innocent it is, to be sure! Any one with half an eye can see his devotion and your blushes."

"Reginald Livingston, are you not ashamed? I am only sixteen, and marriage is a long way off."

"That's just the way all the girls talk," he said mockingly. "Don't be so angry, sis, I sha'n't make you marry. By the way, Ethel, do wear those pearls of mother's?"

I shook my head.

"I always thought they ought to be mine, and as you don't wear them, I want them."

"What do you want them for?"

"Why," hesitatingly, "I want to put them on the tree for Nelly Vaughn. You see my money is all gone," rapidly, "and I can't get her such a present as I want. Run, and get them like a good girl, dear."

"Are you engaged to Miss Vaughn?"

"No, not exactly; but I expect to be."

"Surely, Regie, you would not give anything mamma used to wear to a stranger, who could not prize them as I do?"

"Oh, pshaw! don't be a goosel! Nellie would be delighted, I know; for she was saying yesterday, there was nothing she thought so lovely as pearls, when Lottie was telling of yours. Come, go and bring them."

"I am sorry, Regie, but I cannot do as you wish," I said slowly. "Dear mamma gave them to me, and so did papa. I cannot give them away."

He stared at me a moment, and then burst into a torrent of angry words. He declared our parents were unjustly partial, that not only the jewelry, but the bulk of the property, belonged to him by right, ending with saying, I did not care the least for him.

"Cry away, you little simpleton!" he exclaimed passionately, as I could not restrain my tears. "I was going to get you a present, but I won't now."

"I can let you have fifty dollars," I sobbed.

"That's a good little sister," he said, in a mollified tone, as he kissed me.

But, somehow, I shrank from his caresses, and with an aching heart brought him the money.

"It took more than I expected, and I will get you something another time," he said apologetically, when I looked in vain for my present among the many beautiful ones he had purchased for the others.

"That money went for presents," he said coolly, the day before the merry party broke up. "Have n't you a trifle more?"

"Only about fifty dollars."

"You can get plenty more any time of Alston. I am ashamed to be without a cent."

"I shall have to be."

"That's jolly! A girl with a hundred thousand without pocket money."

Well, it was foolish, but I yielded.

All day New Year's I kept my room. I could not bear the light laughter, and merry nonsense of the happy group in the parlor. I went down and saw the tableaux in the evening, but when the dancing commenced I stole back to my silent room.

"Young Mr. Livingston is very wealthy, is he not?" I heard Miss Vaughn ask Mrs. Alston.

"His father left the greatest part of his fortune to his daughter, for Reginald is very extravagant. He will not come into possession of his portion until he is twenty-five, if he marries against my husband's wishes," replied Mrs. Alston.

"Ah!" with bitter sweetness.

A gratified smile curved Mrs. Alston's lips, as she left the room, and my brother took her place.

"Blush-roses," he said, in a low tone, gently laying a rose against her soft cheek.

"You are presuming, Mr. Livingston," she said haughtily.

He looked at her in surprise, saying softly, as he tried to take her hand, —

"Have I offended you, Nelly?"

Her lip curled scornfully.

"You have not," coldly, cuttingly.

He was not deficient in pride, and his tone was haughty as her own, as he said, with a bow, —

"I beg your pardon, Miss Vaughn."

That ended his infatuation. He was graciously received back by Bella; and, spite

of her hauteur, Miss Vaughn was too much of a flirt not to feel pique at his desertion, and exert her power to win him back.

The holidays were over, and I went back to school alone, as Lottie decided to remain at home. Several new faces greeted me; among them, one Edith de Lascelles, a lovely girl of seventeen. Darling Edie! how I loved her! Madame graciously allowed her to room with me.

We were soon familiar with each other's history. Edith was never tired of chanting her only brother's praises, and wishing I might see him.

I spent the long summer vacation with her. Oh those long, beautiful days, filled to overflowing with happiness! They were a foretaste of that life of light and love prepared for all who love purity of heart.

Mr. and Mrs. de Lascelles were the kindest of hosts, and for the first time since my father's death, I felt I was not a homeless, friendless waif. And Stuart! It was a new revelation to me to see such tender, thoughtful care for his young sister; and my heart throbbed painfully, as I thought of careless, selfish Reginald.

It was with a sad heart that I saw the happy days slip quickly away, and I must bid my kind friends adieu. I was invited to spend the vacations with Edie, and Stuart whispered he had one request to make, — would I grant it?

"I will do anything I can," I said simply, "so please tell me what it is?"

"It is that you will write me every time Edie does."

I blushed scarlet under the light in his handsome eyes.

"Will you not, Ethel?" he asked reproachfully, as I did not answer.

I could not say no, with that tender reproach in his tone, so I said, —

"Yes."

"Thank you," he said, his face glowing.

"My little darling!" I heard him murmur under his breath. "Bring Ethel with you, Edie, when you come home," were his last words to his sister.

Reginald never wrote me unless he wanted money, and when Christmas came, he insisted on my going to the Grange to spend the holidays. He seemed quite pleased to see me, and as a proof of his affection asked for money.

"That is the reason he desired me to come and see him," I thought bitterly.

"Reginald, what do you do with so much money?" I asked quietly. "I have let you have several hundred dollars, and with your income it ought to be sufficient."

He laughed uneasily.

"It takes a deused lot of tin to keep up with the other fellows. We have a lot of expenses, girls know nothing about."

"What are some of them?" a terrible suspicion in my mind.

"Oh, rides, suppers, and — and lots of things."

"Dear Regie," I said solemnly, resting my head on his shoulder, "you are sadly changed since dear papa left us. You smoke constantly, and your breath is scented with brandy, and the face mamma thought so fair and frank is flushed and swollen. O my beloved brother, I beseech you to pause before it is forever too late," I cried passionately.

"Anything else, my fair sister?" he sneered.

"O Regie, how happy we might be!"

"So we might, if it was n't for your straight-laced, puritan notions," angrily. "You are eternally lecturing me and finding fault; and if I say a word, you cry like a baby. Why on earth are n't you like other girls?"

"I cannot be silent when I see my only brother going the swift road to ruin," I replied gently.

"By Jove! Ethel, you are enough to provoke a saint!" passionately, rising and pacing the floor. "Why can't you let a fellow, alone and take your own advice? I'm not going to be tied to a girl's apron-string, I can tell you."

"I don't want to dictate to you, Reginald, but you are very dear to me, and — and we are all alone, you and I," swallowing a big lump in my throat.

"Pshaw!" fretfully, "you never was like any one else."

There was a long pause.

"Come, just hand over the stamps," he said at last.

"Why do you not apply to Mr. Alston?"

"Good gracious! Have n't you a spark of sense, Ethel? He has let me have all and more, too, than the governor left me yearly. It's a deused shame to treat me so."

"Papa did all for the best," I replied sadly, shocked at his tone and the slang so freely used. "I promised papa before he

died, I would not let all my money go for late suppers and fast horses, so I have no more for you at present."

With a fierce imprecation he rushed from the room. He would scarcely speak when I next met him, and wore an injured air even when he bade me adieu.

Richard's attentions were disagreeably pertinacious, the girls joked me, and I was very glad when the holidays were over and I was back at school.

"You can't think how disappointed they all were not to see you, Stuart especially," cried Edie, almost smothering me with kisses. "Come right up to our room. I have lots to tell and my presents to show you."

"We want to see Ethel as well as you," exclaimed the rest of the girls.

"Well, come along then. Come, Ethel."

"They were so sure of you, your presents were bought with mine, you darling," giving me an ecstatic little hug. "There is mamma's present," handing me a beautiful work-box, "the inlaid writing-desk came from papa, and this is Stuart's. It's a box of gloves, I know, but he told me not to open it, so take it quick. I've been dying to open it ever since I had it. There, dearie, how do you like my present?" clasping a pair of bracelets made of her own hair on my wrists.

"Oh, I'm perfectly delighted!" I cried rapturously. "How I love you all!" the ready tears springing to my eyes and trembling in my voice.

The following vacations I spent with Edie, and two years rolled away without my visiting my guardian. Reginald had been in Europe over a year, when I left school. I had urged him to wait until my education was finished, and I would accompany him.

"He was n't going to follow a girl's whims," he said, and went his way.

I had one thing to comfort me; Richard Alston was not with him.

Mr. Alston's family spent the summer at Newport, and I accompanied them. Among Lottie's train of beaux, Alphonse Morelle's elegant form was always seen. Lottie was the most willful, coquettish sprite it was ever my lot to meet, teasing her lovers until they were nearly cut of their senses.

"He has some power over her," I thought, as I saw Alphonse's fiery glances, and Lottie's deprecating smile.

"Why do you avoid me, *mon ami*, my

wife?" he whispered passionately, as they paused beside me.

"I do not!" she exclaimed coldly. "You will make people suspect something by following my every step."

"Let them: I wish they would," hotly, grasping her hand fiercely.

"Hush! You hurt me. Now be a good darling, and keep quiet a little longer, and all will be well," looking at him with pleading, tender eyes.

Some new-comers interrupted the conversation, and I heard no more.

To say that I was surprised would feebly express my feelings. The secret weighed heavily on my heart, but I dared share it with no one.

The season was a merry one, but I did not enjoy it. Ida was to be married in October, so we returned home the last of August, to make ready for the wedding. Reginald was to be present, and after the brilliant affair was over, I was to go to Mr. de Lascelle's, where my brother was to join me a week before Christmas.

Richard came home a while before the wedding. He was a dashing young fellow, with fiery lights in his dark eyes that made me involuntarily shrink from him. He followed me constantly, until I staid in my chamber to avoid him.

One evening as I was alone in the arbor, he suddenly appeared and in passionate tones told of his love.

"Pray say no more, Mr. Alston," I exclaimed, clasping my hands. "I thank you for your good opinion, but"—falteringly—"I—I—I have been betrothed over a year."

"Reginald," he gasped hoarsely, his blazing eyes on my face.

"Knows not of it."

"Girl, girl, I love you," he said, his voice so low I scarcely heard the words. "Don't dare trifle with me."

Dropping my arm, he turned and left me. I carried the mark of his hand on my arm for weeks.

Next day, Reginald in his earnestness forgot his fashionable drawl, and sternly bade me accept him.

"I do not love him."

"Love him!" he sneered. "The fellow loves you to distraction."

"I will never give my hand without my heart goes with it," resolutely.

"Sentimental simpleton! I tell you you



shall marry him. I am a Livingston, and I have sworn it."

"Recollect I, too, am a Livingston, and cannot be frightened into submission."

"Ethel," he cried shrilly, "it is death to me if you refuse Dick Alston."

"What do you mean?" an awful fear in my heart.

He buried his face in his hands, his form shaking with emotion.

"I dare not tell," he wailed, "but I am in his power. I little thought in my recklessness that you would be sacrificed. Oh that awful weight suspended by a hair over my head!"

"Will he not take my fortune instead? O Reginald, I will give up all, everything I possess to save you."

"You are a dear, good sister," he cried, with genuine emotion. "but it is impossible. Dick is bewitched about you, and always was. I have offered all I have in vain."

"But I am not free, Reginald. I am betrothed to Stuart" —

"Without my consent?" hastily. "I did not know. Go, go, and be happy, and leave me to my fate. If no other means avail, why I — I can die!" he exclaimed, groaning tragically.

"Let me think," I said slowly, a dazed feeling settling over me.

My brain whirled, and my heart almost suffocated me, as I paced my room in agony. I could hear music and light laughter in the parlor, and I rushed from the house. Throwing myself down by the little brook, back of the house, I gave way to a wild burst of tears.

In a few moments Richard and my brother came sauntering down the walk, laughing and talking.

"How can he be so gay?" I thought, almost angrily, as his laugh rang out.

"Poor little innocent!" Richard was saying. "She believed every word, I dare say?"

"Of course. That weight over my head did the business," with a heartless laugh. "Was n't that a lucky hit? By Jove! Ethel is clear grit unless you touch her feelings."

"You did well, Livingston. and after I marry the fiery little beauty, I'll make over several thousands to you as I agreed," heartily.

"All right, my boy."

The next moment I stood before them.

Such guilt and consternation as their faces expressed! Reginald gave a whistle of dismay, and fled. Richard almost directly recovered his self-possession, pleading that his great love had led him into error.

"True love never debases one," I replied, as I turned away. He left home next day, and I never saw him again, for he died suddenly the following winter.

Reginald was taciturn and moody; Bella grew pale and thin; Lottie, too, was feverishly gay or sad and *distract*: so all seemed relieved when the wedding was over, and the guests departed.

The next day, Lottie not appearing, Bella entered her chamber. The bird had flown, and a note explained she had fled with her husband.

Mr. Alston swore he would disown her; but, a year or so later, I heard they were forgiven.

Stuart came after me, and in spite of Reginald's haughty displeasure, he won a moody consent, from my brother, to our marriage.

A few days before Christmas, Reginald arrived at Mr. de Lascelles'. My heart ached at his wan face, and hollow eyes. The next day he was burning with fever, and raving wildly.

The doctor looked grave, and shook his head, as I begged him to save my brother's life.

"His life is in higher hands than mine, young lady," he said kindly, "but all that can be accomplished by my skill shall be done."

It was a long fearful sickness, but he began to gain at last.

"I am such a good-for-nothing fellow," he broke out one day, "I almost wish I was dead."

"O my dear brother," clasping the thin hands. "rather thank God you are spared to redeem the mistakes of the past."

"You are a darling sister," drawing my face down to his.

A long pause ensued.

"I ask your forgiveness, Ethel dear, for" —

"Hush, hush, my darling," I interrupted: "let us remember all that is pleasant, and and forget the rest."

"You are just like mother," reverently, kissing me fondly.

There was never a shadow between us afterward.

From that sick bed, Reginald rose a changed man.

I was not too much absorbed in Stuart to see the pretty love affair between my

brother and my lovely friend, and in the spring there were two weddings at Mr. de Lascelles'.

Life has gone on very happily since then, and Edie has never regretted that she became my brother's wife.

## A LIFE LOST, AND A LIFE WON.

BY AMANDA M. HALE.

[No. 2. — COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

But the word he longed for would not come to her lips. Deep down in her heart was the doubt that stayed it. Did she love him? An hour ago the answer would have been swift to come. And what had come between them since to change their relation? Nothing except Vale's passionate emotion and entreaties. But no matter for that. If she did not love him, marriage was a sin. She planted herself upon that. It was all she had to hold by,—the old truth to which she had always clung. So she rose, and looking gravely into his face, said,—

"Vale, I cannot give it to you. Don't be angry," as she saw his quick, impatient gesture. "It breaks my heart to grieve you; but I must not be false to myself, even for you. If I loved you, I don't know what I might think I ought to do. I believe I could venture to suffer a good deal for any one whom I loved. But I am sure, dear Vale, that I don't love you, not in the way I ought to if I was to be your wife."

She began to move toward the house. Vale followed sullenly. At the door, she said,—

"Come in, and stay with us."

"No: you can't want me, I am sure," in an angry tone. "Good-night."

"Vale!" cried Margaret.

He was just going, but the word stayed him.

"Don't go away angry. We have been friends too long, and you have always been very good to me."

Some really noble feeling, unmixed with self, rose in Vale's heart.

"Margaret, I'm a brute. I don't blame you for rejecting me. I'm not worthy of you or any woman half so good. God bless you, Margaret!"

He was gone, and Margaret went up to her own chamber.

Half past ten, by her father's watch that ticked upon the mantel. Margaret stood and looked at the little time-keeper,—a precious legacy. Her eyes were upon its rich, antique chasing and quaint devices, but her thoughts were far away, going over the half-hour past, so short, but working such a strange revolution in all her feelings.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### MAKING ACQUAINTANCES.

Mrs. Amber's parlor was the only apartment in the house in whose arrangement her tastes had been consulted. Elsewhere, there was a clean, sweet freshness and simplicity which suited Margaret's character, as well as it did the economy that she found it necessary to practice.

But, in the early days of their marriage, Mr. Amber had given his wife *carte blanche* concerning the appointments of the spacious, handsome parlor, and she had indulged in all those luxurious arrangements which represented her idea of comfort.

It was just the place for an ease-loving nature to burrow in, and find pleasure. Soft, brilliant hues were everywhere,—in the cushioned easy-chairs, inviting to a nap; in the hassocks, tempting to idle feet; in the carpet, an arabesque of crimson and gold,—the whole a dream of Oriental luxury. Even the pictures upon the walls were full of repose,—ships becalmed on a summer sea; a drowsy landscape glimmering through the haze of a midsummer afternoon; the golden rest of a stretch of desert sands.

Vale Amber and his friend came into this room just when the long afternoon was nearing twilight, and Paul found himself wondering at the exquisite propriety with which the three women who were sitting

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there fitted into so beautiful a frame. Margaret was not there; and after the first glance of surprise and admiration with which Vale's eyes rested upon Elsie—a look which called a vivid glow to the girl's cheek, that burned there all the evening—he went out to find Margaret. Crossing the hall, he called hastily,—

“Margaret!”

She came in immediately, throwing the flowers she had been cutting carelessly upon a table, and blushing rosy with the remembrance of the last night.

But Vale was quite composed. A night's sleep, and a long consultation with himself in the morning, had made such a change in his plans and wishes, that his chief desire was now for Margaret to forget that he had overstepped the limits of cousinly affection. So he met her with a gay nonchalance, and drew her at once into the parlor.

He was talking in his rapid, eager way as they came in, so engrossing her attention, that she stood in Paul Barron's presence, and he gathered in the impression of her sweet, proud beauty, a full minute before she observed him. Then, at a word from Vale, the beautiful eyes were turned upon him, meeting his with that innocent, straightforward look, which was their peculiarity: her face did not vary from its sweet repose, and the round, ivory cheek showed no change of color, as their hands touched. For almost the first time in his life, Paul grew awkward and self-conscious, and wondered, as he sat down by her, whether he could find anything to say which would interest her. Vale was between Elsie and Mrs. Amber, and a light, sparkling conversation sprang up; Mrs. St. Ives joining at intervals, and occupying the interim by a keen study of Vale Amber.

Margaret was quiet, at first, feeling a little pain as well as surprise at Vale's behaviour, and she took out her sewing, and began to employ herself about it. But she was sitting quite apart from the rest, and presently it occurred to her that she must say something to this tall, broad-shouldered man, with the leonine head, and steady, blue eyes,—eyes that seemed to take in every movement, without any obtrusive staring.

How they went from talking of the summer weather, and the drowsy sea-side town, to quaint old Germany, and mediæval times and literature, Margaret could not have

told, nor how she was tempted to bring out her “Faust,” and submit some of the knotty phrases to Paul Barron; but they were now deep in the volume, and he was following her taper finger along the crabbed German text, when Vale called out suddenly,—

“What do you say to a sail?”

“Wait a moment, Vale. Here, Mr. Barron, is the sentence. I get lost among these compound words, though I think them so full of meaning, but”—

“My boat is rocking on the sea,” sang Vale.

“Yes, Vale.”

The minutes drifted by. Elsie ran upstairs for her equipments. Mrs. St. Ives followed.

“Won't you go?” said Vale to Mrs. Amber.

“Dear me! No, I thank you. It would be the height of imprudence this warm afternoon.” And the lady fanned herself languidly.

“But it will be cool on the water,” insisted Vale, who, for some reason, took great pains to be courteous to Mrs. Amber.

“Then I should be sure to take cold,—and, besides, I expect Dr. Godfrey every minute.”

Elsie came tripping down-stairs in a charming toilet: the jaunty hat with its drooping black plumes set off the haughty little head; her cheeks glowed like ripe cherries; and the splendid hazel eyes were soft and luminous.

Vale stood talking to Mrs. St. Ives, his light, careless manner just dashed with a little, deferential air which was very winning. Few persons could have resisted it. Mrs. St. Ives was haughty and satirical: she had a keen contempt for weak people, a scornful dislike of fast young men, and yet she received Vale's little delicate attentions with a pleased smile, and listened graciously to his gallant speeches to Elsie.

“Come, Margaret, are we to be off without you?”

Margaret started, came back to the world lying around her.

“Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Barron. I have been very selfish in keeping you,” she said, with a little glow of shame at her forgetfulness. “Don't wait for me, Vale, pray. I don't deserve to go, after making you wait, and indeed I don't care to.”

So they went chattering and laughing

down the path that led to the shore. But Paul lingered.

"Won't you go, Miss Amber?"

"I shall only detain you."

"Not long, I am sure. Won't this do for a wrap?" taking down her own water-proof from the stand in the hall.

The boat had not pushed off when they reached the shore. It was just about to do so, when Margaret cried suddenly, —

"Vale, wait, please! There's Kitty Gray! I must return. Or suppose we ask her to go with us."

Vale looked around eagerly, sprang out of the boat, and reached the boat just as Kitty was entering it. Elsie watched the meeting with great annoyance. What possessed Margaret to intrude this factory-girl upon them, she wondered. Now, there would very likely be an absurd ado about her singing, thought Elsie, who did not know one note from another. It was all very well listening to such people at the opera, but as for admitting them to your set—that was just one of Margaret's notions. So Elsie sat in the stern, pouting prettily, when Vale came back with Kitty Gray. Kitty came down the little descent that led to the wharf, with an air of shy pleasure that was irresistibly winning. Paul Barron, though no great admirer of petite, childish beauty, thought he had never, in his life, seen so charming a picture. The pure, delicate complexion glowed like a rose, the little, shining rings of brown hair clustered around the loveliest forehead; the large, dewy, violet eyes were turned to Vale, with a timid, appealing sweetness; and the red lips were just parted in a smile. Elsie made room for her haughtily, and Kitty nestled down beside the beauty. She would much rather have been beside Margaret, whom she loved as well as feared not a little, but then Vale was here. And Vale proved himself master of the situation, dividing his words and gallantries between them with such tact, that they were soon in the gayest of spirits. It was a most interesting tableau to the party at the end of the boat.

"I had no idea she was such a lovely creature," whispered Mrs. St. Ives.

"Oh, I don't mind her beauty so much," said Margaret, smiling; "but you should hear her voice. But she is very lovely: don't you think so, Mr. Barron?"

"Yes, a certain kind of loveliness, like

that of Undine before she found her soul, I should fancy."

"Well," said Mrs. St. Ives, "I think I should be willing to do without a soul, if I had such a beautiful body."

"Souls are rather uncomfortable things," rejoined Paul. "A body with only the senses might lead a gay life, especially if the perceptions were thrown in."

"You draw nice distinctions," said Mrs. St. Ives.

"I imagine that there are a good many people whose souls don't make their existence felt very often," began Margaret, and then she stopped suddenly, for a low, soft melody stole out upon the summer air, and presently that marvelous voice was thrilling and delighting them; lifting them far above those dull, earthly levels, singing to them like the choral music of heaven; life was transfigured, love grew holy, and pain died in deepest peace. Then a hush came.

"Sing again," pleaded Margaret.

Kitty smiled over at her, and sang again; and, as she sang, her face grew rapt and noble.

"Has not Undine found her soul?" whispered Margaret.

Paul's appreciative look answered her: but the next moment he started with sudden pain; for the song was ended, and a change flashed over the singer, as though the inspiration had suddenly failed her, and her hungry human soul was crying out in wild longing. Margaret saw it too, and her eyes met Paul's.

"I am afraid her genius will pour all its glory through her voice, and leave her life barren," whispered Paul.

Margaret's eyes filled.

"How should genius suffice her! for Kitty has a clamorous, exacting heart, poor little factory-girl that she is."

"She must wait, and keep it quiet till its day of power comes," said Paul.

Margaret shook her head.

"Women don't find it easy to do that, I fear."

"My dear young friends," broke in Mrs. St. Ives's satirical voice, "you are getting far beyond me. Please come back to *terro firma*."

"With all my heart," laughed Margaret. "What if we should land on yonder rocky point? There are magnificent cliffs, and a strip of sandy beach just beyond. I dare say we shall find some pretty shells."

They rounded toward the point, and landed; chased each other over the rocks in glee, and, running up and down the beach, grew breathless with laughter. It is only persons who are very graceful or entirely self-forgetful that can afford to indulge in the abandon of childhood. But these essentials were possessed by our party.

And so the twilight shadows fell; the sun was long gone down, and presently a wild, sighing wind came creeping in from the sea, and a cloud of white mist following it shut out the blue horizon, hid the far sails from sight, and spread itself over the sea, opaque, palpable, and pale as a shroud. And under it the sea wailed and sobbed, and broke upon the beach in hoarse murmurs, and rushed out of the rocky inlets in tumultuous haste, with discordant, woful shrieks, most like the inarticulate cries of human grief.

They sat upon the cliffs, and watched the fog drifting in upon shore. The wind had risen, and the waves came now in great, resistless masses, running far up the sands, and flecking the butting crags with foam. Now and then the mist was cleft by the keen, strong wind, and one caught a glimpse of the clear sky, and the stars coming out one by one.

Vale had grown moody, and sat with sulken brows, his face occasionally darkening yet more and more. Margaret and Paul were getting acquainted much faster than he liked. Elsie was very quiet. She only knew that Vale had suddenly grown grave. Never an acute reader of character, she was easily baffled by Vale: she never thought to try to penetrate the intricacies of his singularly complicated nature. But it was a pleasure to sit near him; to receive the little, graceful attentions that Vale never forgot in his most absent, darkest moods; to catch a glance from his fiery, winning eyes, or a word in a voice that was always musical and kind. So Elsie sat quietly and content.

But little Kitty Gray moved about restlessly. Some undefined uneasiness beset her. She wandered away from the party, and was soon quite isolated by the fog, which hid her behind its white, vapory wall.

Poor little Kitty! Tears ran so readily to those pretty, soft eyes; and just now she was so vexed and miserable that all the world looked suddenly dark. Vale was cross. That was the cause of her misery, she thought. Vale was cross, and did n't

like her! And Kitty liked Vale very much indeed. Years ago, when she was a little, chubby thing in pantalets, with great, wondering eyes, and a cloud of golden hair that was always a little wilderness of curls, where the sunshine lost itself, and the school-children teased her, and asked her "if she was n't old Skipper Gray's girl, and what made her daddy get drunk," Vale, a handsome, manly boy, coming down, as it seemed to the child, from some higher sphere, silenced and shamed them all, and led her home, holding fast her little, fat fingers, and looking down at her with those brilliant, beautiful eyes. The childish heart, so grateful then, was loyal in all coming years. Vale did not forget her. How could he, when the shy, pretty face looked up at him so appealingly, her wondering admiration for him shining all over her face? It was pleasant to draw her out, — to make the winsome little thing at ease with him, and bring out all her charming graces. Hers was a worship to which, as boy or man, Vale could not be insensible. There was a peculiar pleasure in a homage that was so entire, and Kitty would as soon have thought of arraigning Heaven itself as blaming Vale. Her king could do no wrong. And so the years drifted by. Vale, if he had not cultivated the intimacy, had not discouraged it.

Chance meetings had been frequent, and those that were not by chance were not rare. Little Kitty was in the charmed circle, and it was so pleasant she did not try to escape. She knew that she was betrothed to Ben King, but Vale's lightest word thrilled and delighted her; her sailor lover grew tame and insipid, and Kitty was petulant and discontented.

And so she wandered from the party, and hid herself in the fog; she grew more and more unhappy, and at last, going far out on the cliff, curled down in a great hollow of the rocks, and cried to herself quick, passionate sobs, the uncontrolled grief of a child. Not simply because Vale was cross. Deep down in the loving, exacting, impulsive heart, there was a sore, angry jealousy of Elsie. Vale would marry Elsie, and not care anything about her any more. And Kitty grew angry and bitter, thinking why she could not have been a lady instead of a poor, ignorant girl.

Absorbed in these thoughts, she did not mind how the tide was rolling in, not until a great wave came rushing, seething all

around her, swirling the spray into her face, blinding her eyes, and drenching her garments. Then she started up with a half cry upon her lips. Only a step, and another, greater wave had caught her, and torn her, shrieking, from the rock.

Night was setting in now, and the party on the rocks were rising to go. Margaret looked around.

"Where is Kitty?" she said.

What was it that they heard just then? Only the sobbing of the sea? or was it a human cry ringing along the wild wind? A moment they stood, with blanched faces and strained ears. Then it came again, — that eager, agonized cry, full of terror and pathos and prayer.

And now the wind cut a great gap in the fog, and a reach of gray water opened before them. They shrank back, appalled. Far out from the shore a huge, pyramidal rock shot out of the water. Day by day, year by year, the tides besieged it, tugging at its foundations, and lashing its sharp, stony sides. But still its apex rose above the waves, a black speck in the waste of foam.

And now what was it they saw there? Something white, and yet alive, pray God, — Kitty Gray, clinging and calling wildly for help, only her voice was lost in the noisy tumult of the sea.

Margaret cried out aloud. Could any help reach her in season? There was no time for an answer. Paul and Vale were both seeking the bottom of the cliffs. But Vale, knowing every crevice and cranny of the rocky sea-wall, swung himself from jutting point to point, and in an instant was swimming with all his might. The fog shut down and hid them. Paul paused a moment on a sharp, out-lying rock.

"The boat!" somebody cried down to him from the rocks above.

He looked up into Margaret's white face.

"It would be broken on the rocks in a moment," he shouted back to her.

The whole cove was filled with them. The other side of the crags a smooth bay opened out to the sea. Here no boat might venture.

"If we could only see!" whispered Margaret, with white lips. But the fog grew thicker, and the night shut down fast.

Vale, swimming with swift, strong strokes, shouted, —

"Kitty!"

A low, faint cry came back to him. And

now he could see her, — the white, lovely face distorted by pain and terror; the curls all wet, and clinging around the low, fair forehead; the little hands holding by the sharp angle of the rock. In a moment more she was in his arms, still sensible, and obedient to all he told her; and so he carried her to the shore, setting her down at last upon a high shelf, out of the reach of the waves, and looking down at her as she stood there, pale and lovely, with a tenderness that was not all admiration for her innocent beauty.

"Little Kitty, I am glad I have saved you."

Could any one else have said such simple words in such a tone? Kitty did not analyze it at all. To her it was a most natural thing that Vale should snatch her from an awful death, and his words made her feel as though she was in some way peculiarly precious to him. Her heart was full of an emotion that shook her from head to foot.

She scarcely knew when the rest came up; scarcely heard their congratulations. She let herself be wrapped in a great, shaggy boat-cloak, and sat quietly where they placed her, her eyes gleaming strangely bright.

Arrived at home, Margaret nursed and petted her till Vale laughingly protested, saying, —

"A salt-water bath won't do her any harm."

And indeed the roses were now come back to her face, and Margaret was soon relieved.

The evening wore away. The fog vanished apace; and the wind, shifting to the south, blew up warm and delicious. The garden tempted them out. Patches of moonlight lay white upon the paths, and the tangled arbors were sweet with the odor of dying flowers.

Indoors, Mrs. Amber was talking to Dr. Godfrey in a state of placid content. Mrs. St. Ives sat at the piano, playing broken chords, — sweet, melodious snatches of song. Presently she impatiently swept the keys, rose in haste, and went out.

Paul and Margaret were standing in the shadow of the lindens.

"Where is Kitty?" said Mrs. St. Ives.

Margaret started.

"She will take cold," she said. "I must go and find her."

"Don't you go, Mr. Barron," protested

Mrs. St. Ives. "It is like a story, — I forget what it was; but one went after another, and nobody ever came back."

But Paul went on, laughingly disregarding her.

Margaret made her way through the tangled shrubbery. Since her father was gone, the garden was a mere jungle; and Margaret never went into it without a sorrowful, yearning remembrance of him. The grapevines grew against the southern wall. Pushing away the riotous clematis that swung from tree to tree, and spread a leafy curtain across the way, she came in sight of them, starting back the next instant with a feeling of surprise and sharp pain. Just under the shade of the vine stood the two. Vale was holding her in his arms, bending over her: the little hand clung to his shoulder, and the lovely violet eyes were looking up into his face with tender wistfulness. Was there then a passionate kiss?

Margaret drew back, pale and shocked; and Paul Barron stood there by her. She could only hope that he had not seen this tableau; for she could guess nothing by his grave, composed face. She led him down by another path; and presently Kitty came out, her cheeks like roses, and her lips quivering. Vale followed, with a handful of leaves.

"I could have got them sooner, only Kitty's little, clumsy fingers were all the time in my way," he said, laughing.

They walked back to the house, all grave and *distracted*, — all except Vale, whose presence of mind was too perfect to easily fail him.

When the evening was almost gone, and it was time to think of going home, Paul Barron went to Margaret.

"Would you like me to take your little friend home?" he asked.

Margaret looked up at him with quick thankfulness.

"If you would, thank you."

And it was arranged.

Elsie's face showed her satisfaction, and Vale had the grace to conceal his annoyance.

Little Kitty felt very much like being cross. She had counted upon Vale; and she was, moreover, exceedingly afraid of this tall man, who walked in a stately fashion beside her, addressing to her some grave remark from time to time.

She was quite glad to escape from him,

and get inside the dingy shop, where she could work off her vexation in a hearty little crying fit.

Paul walked back swiftly, having given a quick glance all over the premises, and taken in the whole history of the Grays in that hasty inspection.

He paused before the gate of the Amber homestead. Vale was coming away, and stopping on the steps to speak to Margaret. Paul waited.

"Don't scorn me utterly, Margaret," said Vale hurriedly. "Was I to wear my heart on my sleeve?"

"It is not your manner to me that troubles me," said Margaret gently.

"What then?"

But his face flushed, showing that he was in no mood for what he was pleased to call a "lecture."

"Your own heart must tell you," she said.

Vale gave an amused whistle.

"Dear little saint!" he said. "But you should have taken advantage of last night. You had it in your power to do as you liked with me, — make a saint of *me* if you'd chosen."

Margaret turned away indignantly, and Vale sauntered down the path.

"I must make my adieux," said Paul, passing him.

He went in, bade them all good-night, and came out again to Margaret, still standing on the steps.

"Good-night, Miss Margaret."

He wanted to shake hands with her; but she did not see, did not guess. Yet as he lingered, she said, —

"I hope you have had a pleasant day!"

"So pleasant that I am afraid I shall trouble you often, if you give me permission."

"We shall always be glad to see you," said Margaret frankly.

"Thank you! and we will attack 'Faust' again?"

"Ah! that would be delightful."

"I shall find it so, I am sure. Good-night."

She gave him her hand now, as he extended his own, and Paul walked away, much more exhilarated than the few simple words spoken would seem to have justified.

"Your leave-taking required a long time," said Vale, as he came up. "Here am I, almost asleep."



But he was not asleep, or anything like it. Every faculty was wide awake, and his heart was filled with a sore, angry, dog-in-the-manger feeling. He went along sullenly, almost hating Paul Barron. He did not now want to marry Margaret himself, — he reflected that it was impossible. — but his whole soul rose in arms against his friend, who acted as if he might some day claim her. Vale's anxiety made him quick to draw conclusions.

## CHAPTER V.

### HOPES AND FEARS.

There were just two persons in the world whom Mrs. Amber loved with all her heart, — herself and Elsie. And accordingly, when Elsie came down-stairs the next morning, her beautiful color gone, her eyes deep sunken in purple hollows, and her air depressed and miserable, Mrs. Amber took the alarm at once.

You are certainly getting ill, my love. I always feared you inherited my frail constitution. I must see Dr. Godfrey about you at once. I wonder if it would n't be a good thing for you to go away somewhere."

"I am not ill, and I don't want to be sent away anywhere," said Elsie coldly.

Margaret looked at her anxiously. She had never understood the girl's passionate nature, — breaking out into fiery emotion at times, but usually cold and reticent. Late in the night she had heard Elsie walking back and forth across her chamber, as was her way when greatly agitated. Margaret had not dared to go to her, and could lie and wait in nervous sympathy till the room grew still.

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Amber.

"Don't," interrupt Elsie, rising quickly. "I am not ill, and I don't like to be pitied. You know I detest sick people."

And Elsie went hurriedly out of the room.

"The poor child is certainly ill," moaned Mrs. Amber. "I always knew she was delicate. If I should lose her, it would break my heart. I should never survive it, I know I should n't."

"Dear mother, are n't you making yourself miserable quite unnecessarily? I don't think there is anything serious the matter with Elsie. Perhaps she didn't sleep well. I heard Romeo barking in the night, and he may have disturbed her."

"Why, Margaret! How can you talk so? It sounds very unfeeling. It's all very well for you, with your health, — you don't know anything about nerves," said Mrs. Amber, in an agrieved tone.

"I'm glad I don't," laughed Margaret, quite willing to be the conductor to draw away Mrs. Amber's thoughts from Elsie.

And now while Mrs. Amber went off into a detailed account of her sufferings from time to time, to which Mrs. St. Ives listened with a smile of quiet contempt, Margaret went away.

Up in her room Elsie was sitting, feeling very ill at ease and unhappy. The house was all open, and a-light with the glow of the June sunshine. Her window looked down into the green gloom of the great lindens. Birds were chirping outside, and the street people were passing up and down. Down-stairs, Margaret was singing about her work. Nobody was miserable, except herself. Elsie knew that it was so, without very well understanding why it was so.

"But I am different from them," she said to herself.

It was quite true, and yet she had a vague expression that she need not on that account have been miserable. Surely there was happiness for her as well as for other people. She did not know that she was suffering just for want of self-control, which no one about her had been wise enough to teach her. She wondered what made the difference between her and Margaret. She was quite sure that Margaret could never have let Vale Amber mar her peace. That Margaret disapproved Vale she knew. Elsie was puzzled. He was just as winning to her as if he had been truly pure and noble. She had nothing of that instinctive dread of anything vicious and base that made Margaret recoil from it, and detect it intuitively. Elsie was far more worldly wise than Margaret. She had not spent two or three winters in New York for nothing. She understood the evil part of Vale's character far better than Margaret, and was not at all shocked by it. Men were not expected to be like women, she thought; for, in spite of want of principle, she had certain tenets of her own. And now if — a shade of crimson crept over her face — if Vale should love her, — and it was not a wild dream if words and looks meant anything, — what would happen? Elsie understood that she might expect opposition from her mother perhaps.

in the first place, though Elsie felt that she could easily conquer that, but also from Margaret. Just at this point in her reflections, she heard a little stir down-stairs. Elsie started up in a glow of excitement. Vale's voice! She would know it among thousands. Presently some one tapped on the door, and then Margaret's face appeared.

"Are n't you coming down, Elsie dear?" looking at her wistfully. Vale asks for you."

A little gleam of triumph shone in Elsie's eyes.

"Well! but I must make my toilet first."

"I would n't. You look charmingly now."

Elsie had great confidence in Margaret's taste, and followed her down-stairs at once. Going into the darkened parlor, her splendid, voluptuous beauty seemed to make the room suddenly bright. It was dazzling. Paul Barron felt like shading his eyes, and recalled old pictures that he had seen abroad, — faces that were at home in the golden Orient, — and remembered the old mythologies, the fabled Circe and Lurelei with her bewildering song.

Vale gloomed by himself apart, at first. He had looked haggard in the morning, had affected a better mirth at times since. Paul guessed that something was amiss. But the cloud cleared up presently, and he went over to Elsie, — hovered around her the entire remainder of the day. And Elsie's eyes glowed, and her cheeks grew a richer crimson, and she shook her wonderful curls around her face, and laughed, as one rarely heard her laugh. And then by and by, when twilight fell, and the moon came up, there was a long walk upon the beach with Vale, from which Elsie came in with dewy, drooping eyes, and did not care to trust herself to speak for a long time after.

This day was the *avant-courier* of other days; like it, but yet sweeter. So whole weeks drifted by, past the leafy loveliness of June to the glowing heart of the summer.

It was July before anybody had guessed it, too warm now for sauntering on the beach, or for sailing, except in the fresh morning, or in the soft nights, under star-light or moonlight.

The stone house close down by the cliffs was apt to be deserted very early in the day. All the better for old October. Breakfast always exhausted his culinary invention,

and dinner found him stranded high and dry on barren shores. He knew it was an axiom of household ethics that each meal should have a distinctive character of its own, but how to bring about this desirable consummation puzzled him not a little.

July skies sometimes rain, and rain, too, in a very hearty, whole-souled fashion. One morning Paul Barron awoke, and found the crystal drops driving hard against the window. He had heard the thunder in his dreams, and now upon looking out, he saw a dense, purple-black cloud hanging over the sea, while the waves beneath were churned into foam. Going down-stairs to go out, he heard October in a colloquy with himself. The old fellow stood at the table in the kitchen, twirling a chicken around by one wing. The scarlet scull-cap drawn over his woolly head, the shining, black face under it, the odd medley of garments, which only resembled each other in the circumstance that none of them fitted him, made up a droll picture. Paul stopped, much amused.

"Dis chicken and potatoes for breakfast will do bery well. But den it rains, and like enough dey'll be home to dinner; and to dinner we must hab somefing different. Let's see. Dis chicken and potatoes for breakfas' — could n't ask anything better — and for dinner potatoes — and — and — potatoes — and — chicken," the last word in a voice of dismay and grief.

Paul laughed.

"Good Lord, massa! Did n't know you was round. Like as not, now, you and Massa Vale will be to home to dinner," in an insinuating tone that invited contradiction.

"Perhaps we shall," said Paul mischievously.

"O' Lord!"

Paul went back up-stairs, lounged away a long hour, looking out over the marshes and the sea; looking oftenest at the tall old house among the lindens, and trying to fancy what they would be doing there. They! That was a subterfuge. His thoughts all centred on Margaret. She would be coming down-stairs, with her sweet, morning face. He could think just how her white, taper fingers looked, moving among the tea-cups; and he could see the pretty, thoughtful face hesitating over some household arrangement.

Now old October came pattering in, and

broke the thread of his day-dream, and substituted his grotesque figure for Margaret's womanly sweetness.

Vale came in hastily.

"Any letters last night, Octo?" he inquired.

"Yes, massa. Done forgot to gib 'em to you, 'cause I was asleep when you come home."

"Let me have them now."

Vale tore open two or three envelopes impatiently, and presently came to one which made his face darken. It required all his tact to repress the emotion that shook him. A bitter malediction sprang to his lips. But there was Paul Barron sitting opposite, with cool, keen eyes. He put a strong restraint upon himself.

"I shall have to leave you to your own devices today," he said. "That letter says I must go to P—. Confound the post-office!" Then, with a half-laugh, "I suppose you'll be miserable to have to spend all day at Mrs. Amber's."

"I'll try it, and see," said Paul.

It was plain that Vale did not intend to invite him to go to P—.

"I can drive you up there if you like," he said; but his impatient manner said that he had rather not.

"No, I thank you. I'll write some letters first, and go when I get tired of myself."

"October," called Vale, "get out my horse. I have to ride to P—. I want him right away, too."

"Den massa a'n't comin' home to dinner," said October, moving off with alacrity.

Vale drove away in half an hour, quite safe from the rain, muffled in his water-proof suit, and sitting far back in the roomy chaise, as much because he did not feel like seeing any one whom he must take the trouble to recognize, as to be secure from the wet. He drove rather slowly past the Amber homestead; peeping out, and catching a glimpse of the face that was dearest to him.

"O Margaret!" his heart cried out, "I wish that you loved me, and I had not sold my soul to the Devil."

Then he pshawed at himself for a fool, and told himself, that, having entered on his course, he must go through with it to the end.

Turning now into a lonesome side street, he saw something that made his black eyes

flash with sudden pleasure. A little figure with a cloud wound around her head and dropping low over her forehead, some short, glittering curls hiding under it, meshes, a rose-bud face, fairy feet that stepped daintily over the crossing. Vale's resolution was taken.

"It's a wretched business, anyway. If I can get any pleasure out of it, I've a right to it."

He brought his horse to a sudden stop, sprang out and gave a furtive glance around. In a moment his arm was around her, and she was lifted into the chaise.

"I'll take you there, little Kitty." He leaped to her side, and they rattled away quickly.

"You are not going to the factory!" she exclaimed suddenly, with a pretty look of affright.

"Who said I was? I'm going to P—, and so are you."

"Oh, but I ought not," with a quick smile of pleasure at the thought of it.

"Ought and ought not are dreadful words, are n't they, Kitty? Gay people like you and I won't mind them. Now put up that nonsensical woolly veil so as I can see those sweet eyes more plainly, and I'll tell you how it shall be. I'm going to P— on business, and while I am attending to it I shall leave you at the hotel. Then I come back, and we get a nice dinner, and have a cozy drive home, and nobody is the wiser. But, Kitty, I can't see those eyes yet."

"Nobody wants you to see them," she said, with an air of childish coquetry that he thought enchanting.

"Little story-teller! You need n't pretend you don't like me,—just a little, Kitty. If you did n't you would not wear that bracelet I gave you so long ago."

Kitty pouted.

"You may have it back again if you want," reaching out the plump, white arm toward him.

"No, Kitty. I don't want it. I want something else."

"Do you?" looking away at the rain fast falling on the fields.

"Yes. Could you guess what it is?"

"I don't know."

Kitty put on a charmingly indifferent air. All the while that her foolish little heart was beating wildly with the pleasure of being near him, her coquettish instincts made her try to hide it from him.

"I don't know, I'm sure," her innocent blue eyes upon him.

"Sweet eyes! They look very honest, but they tell a dreadful fib." Kitty's acting amused Vale, who was too wise to be caught by it. She pulled the cloud down over her face.

"Kitty knows very well that I want a kiss," said Vale.

"You can't have it, then," said Kitty coldly.

"Cruel Kitty! Why not?"

"Because Miss Elsie would be very much vexed."

"The deuce take Miss Elsie! What is Miss Elsie to you or me?"

"Nothing to me," said Kitty, flushing up at the remembrance of Elsie's haughty ways.

"Nor to me," said Vale quite truly. Kitty's eyes danced. "Besides," said Vale, "I shall not tell her that you gave me the kiss."

"No, because I sha'n't give it to you," laughed Kitty mischievously, pretending to move further away.

Vale was thinking that this little stolen pleasure must be kept from Elsie at all hazards; thinking, too, how easy it was to tell the truth sometimes. For it was quite true that Elsie was nothing to him. He rather disliked her on the whole, although her strange beauty captivated his senses. But he remembered some scenes in which Elsie had borne a part years before, where her strong, passionate nature had suddenly revealed itself. The revelation was distasteful to him. It was too much like what he hated in himself. Margaret's tender, lofty serenity was his ideal of womanly character. It was a little irksome to know that Elsie was beginning to love him. He had a misgiving about the way in which she could love, and the thought of it was overwhelming to his fickle, superficial temperament. Yet it was necessary, entirely so, to his plans.

Kitty shivered by herself in the cold parlor when Vale left her. It was a long hour that he was gone. She did not know what to do with herself after she had curiously examined the room and its furniture, and looked at the pictures in the magazines upon the table. There was a piano: but she was not sure that she ought to touch it; and, besides, it made her think of home, and how wrong she was in coming here.

All at once she remembered that Margaret

was to have given her a lesson today. She began to tremble with a guilty fear that she should be found out through this. She wished Vale would come, so that they could be starting home. She went to the window to watch for him, climbing up upon her knees and holding by the back of the chair in childish fashion. There were not a great many people in the streets. What few there were hurried along under spread umbrellas in great haste. Now and then a disconsolate dog trotted by, looking extremely dissatisfied with the weather. How hard it rained! how fast the puddles grew in the streets! and how misty and disagreeable was the atmosphere! Kitty began to think it would have been pleasanter to have staid at home, and tended to her spinning frame.

Pretty soon men came along under the windows, — rough-looking men, in sailor's clothes. One, a strong, stalwart fellow, with a good, homely face, glanced up at the window accidentally, then again, and this time with a steady, eager look. Kitty slipped down from her chair, white and shaking all over, terrified as if she had seen a ghost, for it was Ben King. She began to sob aloud in her terror. Then she ran and hid herself behind one of the sofas. She would certainly be found out now. Dolly would know it, and the Ambers would know it, and would be very angry, and Miss Elsie — ah! her displeasure was something quite dreadful to think about. And so Kitty sat very miserable, not daring to stir, and imagining every footstep in the hall was Ben King coming in to carry her home, and she pictured herself put down in the shop all white with shame, and Dolly's grief and her mother's scolding, and more than all Ben's grave, stern face, as he gave her back her ring and told her he would never marry such a girl as she was. Oh, how dreadful it would be! This marriage that they had built so much upon, only waiting till Ben had laid by a little more money! It was to make it so much easier for poor Dolly, and Kitty was to have been such a nice little housekeeper, and when Ben was at sea was to have earned ever so much money singing in the choir and teaching the village children, and it was all going to Dolly; and perhaps there would be enough to pay some great doctor for curing her. Such a precious plan it had been, making them all so happy, — even coaxing the little, dark parlor behind the shop to be the pleasantest home that ever was.

And now was it all over? And then a new thought came into the foolish little head. What if Vale Amber meant to marry her, — was even now thinking to carry her away all unknown to them at home, and make her his wife? And Kitty glowed through her tears at the fancy. Dolly would be surprised, and her mother would be vexed; but, when she came back all dressed in silk as fine as Miss Elsie's, they would forgive her, — all except Ben. Poor Ben! But he was five years older, and had great clumsy hands and a heavy voice, and talked like a sailor as he was, and she did n't know as she loved him, after all.

Kitty was just in the midst of a scene in which Ben was looking down at her with angry eyes, and she was looking up at him with weeping ones, and saying pathetically, "You must n't blame me, Ben, for indeed I did n't love you," when some one laid a hand on the door. Kitty started up, suppressing a shriek. But, no: it was Vale.

He came in, his dark, handsome face pale and stern. His business, whatever it was, had doubtless been unpleasant. But he managed to say, —

"What, crying, little Kitty?"

"I wanted to go home, and I wanted you," said Kitty, drying her tears, and in her inconsequent, illogical way feeling herself quite safe and her troubles at an end now he was come.

Vale must have been very much annoyed, for he did not smile at her little speech. He rang, and ordered dinner. It was rather a quiet meal; and, Vale's face being still pale and anxious, Kitty grew confirmed in the belief that he meant to run away with her, and was planning how to do it to escape detection. But her visions were rudely thrust aside, when, just as Vale was putting her into the carriage, a man in sailor's clothes stepped up and touched his arm.

"Stay, sir: you can't go" —

Vale shook him off. The horse started, — set up his ears.

"Stand aside, my man. You've got a glass too much."

The man's face, which had been very white, flushed redly.

"I a'n't drunk. I know you, sir, and you can't go till" —

Vale turned angrily, then through the mist that came before her eyes Kitty saw the man stagger aside, and the next moment Vale was beside her, and they were rolling

swiftly over the road. She sobbed aloud in her terror.

"Who was it, Kitty?" said Vale, at last, "Ben King."

"Ah! I remember him. Is little Kitty going to marry that great, shaggy, good-natured bear of a man?"

Still Kitty cried.

"Never mind, Kitty. You can easily make it up with him by a little coaxing and a kiss or two."

Poor Kitty! Her beautiful air-castle fell down with a terrible crash. She was mute and miserable all the rest of the way.

When they came into the town they met a tall man under a great umbrella. Kitty, with her cloud drawn down over her face, did not know who it was; but Vale recognized him, and Paul Barron knew very well who it was in the chaise beside Vale.

"I'll set you down here," said Vale, stopping suddenly.

"Just as you please," replied Kitty humbly.

They were just at the head of the lonely street where he had taken her up.

"I'm glad it does n't rain now, Kitty," he said.

And he wrapped her shawl about her so carefully, and looked so handsome, and his voice and manner were so tender, that Kitty softly said to herself, —

"Perhaps, after all," —

And then she hurried home slyly, and went into the house by a back door, and secretly slipped up to her own poor little room under the eaves.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE OLD, OLD STORY.

Paul Barron was spending that rainy morning much more to his satisfaction than was Vale. First he wrote his letters; then he took out palette and canvas, and did an hour or two's work upon a picture that had occupied other rainy days before today. It was pleasant work to him, and he did it well, but it did not confine his thoughts. He fancied that it was because he had told Margaret Amber about it, and showed her the crayon sketch which was its groundwork, that his thoughts clung to her so tenaciously.

He went over one by one the days when he had seen her, — remembering a hundred

little speeches and actions that she had never thought about again. All the different moods in which he had seen her came back to him one by one, and each seemed more charming than the other. He thought how by and by he should go to her, and her face would light up, and the sweet smile — was it for him? — creep into her eyes. And all the time he thought of it, and was impatient to seek her presence, he took a certain pleasure in lingering, — in controlling that impatience. He lingered so long that October began to be greatly exercised again on the subject of dinner, and his black face shone with a broad smile when Paul at last left the house and took the path across the marshes. *The fog lay dense and damp upon the flats; the rain came in large, pelting drops; the sea roared drearily; and yet it was not a dreary walk, for every step brought him nearer to that presence which he owned to himself must make the joy of his future life, else that life would be terribly barren and worthless.* But when he was let into the house, and, having thrown off his weather-proof wrap in the hall, stepped into the drawing-room, he was met by news that was like cold water upon his anticipations.

"A dreadful morning, is n't it, Mr. Barron?" sighed Mrs. Amber. "Margaret will get wet through and through, and will have a long illness, I am certain."

"Is Miss Amber out?" in dismay.

"You would n't have thought it, Mr. Barron! She had promised Kitty Gray a lesson, and she thought she ought to go, as Kitty would come home from the factory on purpose for her. Margaret has such a strict sense of duty."

"Somewhat unusual, is n't it, Mr. Barron?" said Mrs. St. Ives, in her sarcastic way.

"But as I told her," pursued Mrs. Amber, "our first duty is to take care of our health. I always felt that everything must yield to that. No matter what is pending, I always ask myself, am I equal to it? Are my nerves strong enough? Is my physical condition such as to justify me in the exertion?"

"It is a sad pity that you are so often compelled to answer such questions in the negative," said Mrs. St. Ives, in a still more sarcastic tone. "But Margaret is no weakling to be annihilated by a summer shower. Still, if it keeps on raining more and more heavily, I shall wish she was at home."

"Had I not better go for her?" said Paul, starting up. "It is time for the lesson to be ended, is it not?" and he started off with alacrity.

The half-mile was quickly spanned. He entered the shop: nobody was behind the little counter, but there was a sound of voices in the sitting-room. Looking around, Paul saw how poor and dingy the place was, how the handkerchiefs and collars in the window looked as if they had been there for ages, and the cakes and corn-balls on the counter, covered with sallow rutting, had a musty, antediluvian odor. Suddenly some one came forward hastily, — a woman obese and short, furtively wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Is not Miss Amber here?" said Paul quietly.

To his perplexity and astonishment, there was a burst of crying, in the midst of which Paul made out the words, —

"Oh, it's the gentleman that's Mr. Vale's friend. Where is she? Oh, do you know anything about her?"

"About whom? Miss Amber?" exclaimed Paul, in quick alarm.

"Oh, no! Miss Amber is here. It's my Kitty, that is hardly more than a little girl, that has been took off nobody knows where."

Paul looked around; for there beside him stood Margaret with a pale, anxious face, and near her — her poor, shapeless figure in strange contrast to Margaret's queenly height and bearing — was Dolly, the deformed sister, looking up in his face with such pathetic, pleading eyes, that Paul quickly turned away his own in pain.

"My poor little lamb," sobbed the mother, "that is such a pretty, innocent child, that nobody would believe the wickedest man in the world would think a thought of harm of her, let alone carrying her off in broad daylight, and disgracing her before all the town."

Paul's brows lowered.

"Do you know anything about Vale's movements today?" said Margaret, in a low tone.

"Nothing beyond the fact of his going to P — on business, as he said. What is this about Kitty?"

"She was to have been home at eleven," Margaret replied. "I waited an hour for her, and then we sent down to the factory. News came back that she had not been there

today, but one of her girl friends had seen her taken into a chaise by Mr. Amber and driven away."

Margaret was looking very distressed and anxious. Paul thought a moment.

"I might go down to P—. I will do all I can. But first, Miss Margaret, let me take you home," seeing that her sympathies must have been severely taxed, and fearing for her any further pain.

Margaret was glad to go. It was best that the mother and daughter should be alone together. Paul promised to drive to P— directly after he had seen Margaret home.

There was something in the tender way in which he cared for her that touched Margaret, not only on its own account, but as reminding her of Vale. Somehow every day Vale seemed slipping away from the place he had held near her, and Paul Barron was filling it. Margaret had been obliged to put a strong restraint upon herself, and now as they walked along, and she told him about the dismay and grief that Kitty's folly had caused, she could hardly keep back the tears. But this little walk and their common sympathy brought them nearer to each other than weeks of ordinary intercourse had done, and when Paul left her at her door, it was with a sense of hope and happiness springing up in his heart which warmed and glorified all the waste and lonely places of his nature, and made his eyes shine and his fine noble face full of light.

Going back he met Vale returning, followed Kitty at a distance till she was safe at home, went to Margaret with the news, and then took his way across the marshes. Vale was there before him, and met him with an air of saucy defiance, which presently gave way to a wild hilarity of manner meant to hide his real feelings. It did not mislead Paul, and Vale rattled on half the evening about the weather and the people he had seen at P—, and the New-York news. And Paul would not speak to him tonight.

In the morning Vale's mood was still worse. Paul had hoped it would be better, but it was now sullenly defiant instead of carelessly so. Paul had no sooner mentioned Kitty, than an angry flash leaped to his eyes.

"I'm in no mood to be lectured," he retorted.

"So I see. Yet I must speak to you for

that silly child's sake, and her mother's and sister's sake, and for Margaret's."

"Margaret!" Vale faced around suddenly. "Margaret! What has she to do with it? Does Margaret know it?"

"Yes."

Vale gave a low whistle of dismay.

"Then it's all up with Elsie," was his thought; and at this reflection he grew angry.

"You all seem to have set yourself as spies upon my actions," he said, his dark face reddening.

"You know Miss Amber better than to use such words in relation to her," said Paul quietly.

"Margaret — well — yes! But, confound it! what's the use of making a great ado about nothing?"

"Do you call it nothing?" and Paul's face grew stern. "To put notions that can never be realized, and that will only lead to pain, into that little girl's head, to make her mother and sister wretched, and to come between her and her humble lover!"

Paul got up, and walked the room.

"Vale," he said abruptly, "I hardly know how we came to be friends. We should not have been if I had n't seen something in you that made me think you capable of a better life than the one you lead. I did n't become your friend to see you go down to perdition unchecked, or to take any one else there. And now I say you shall not carry this thing any further."

"Who shall prevent me?" demanded Vale doggedly.

"I will."

"What right have you?"

"The same right that every man has to defend the helpless. Vale, any one would think that if no considerations of Christian principles would influence, some feeling of knightly honor would do so."

There was a long pause then. At last Vale rose with a careless laugh.

"Paul, old fellow, you're right, as usual; and I'm wrong, as usual. Give us your hand upon it."

"But I want you to promise to let Kitty alone."

"Confound her pretty face! Let her go, then. I'll not meddle with her. Only don't look at a fellow so, — as if you were just ready to pronounce sentence."

"Be serious, Vale. Now" — and the tone and look were so kind that Vale's

heart was touched — "you are in trouble of some other kind. Can I help you?"

Vale grew pale: his eyes wandered restlessly.

"No!"

"Let me help you, Vale."

"No, no! don't tempt me!" said Vale hastily. Then, laughing, "If you want to do anything for me go and tell Margaret that I repent in dust and ashes, and humble myself at her feet."

"You can guess what answer Margaret would make to that," said Paul. But he went; and, when Vale had written and despatched some letters, he followed.

He felt some misgiving about showing himself to Elsie, but the blush which arose all over the brilliant face, and the sudden drooping of her eyes as he approached, told him that his secret had been kept. "I might have known that it was safe with Margaret," he thought, with keen self-reproach. A momentary impulse came to him to go to her. Some fleeting desire for the good which emanated from her stirred him, but Elsie's playful challenge drew him at once to her side.

"Where were you yesterday, truant?" she said, in her charming way.

"Ah, Elsie! one can't always do as one would." Vale returned, with his most impressive glance.

A large portion of Vale's wooing, whether in play or earnest, was carried on by means of pantomime. It was surprising how far he would make a glance, a drooping of the eyelids, a smile, or a pressure of the hand, available. They fell into low, confidential talk. At the other end of the room was Mrs. Amber, dozing and talking to Mrs. St. Ives by turns, but in no wise inclined to interfere with Elsie. It was smooth water over which Vale was sailing, and he thought he saw the port in sight.

"Do you know that my birthday comes in a week?"

Vale did know it, but he expressed the proper surprise and pleasure.

"And you will be" —

"Twenty-one. Won't it be charming to be one's own mistress?"

"After such tyranny as you have endured," said he.

Elsie laughed.

"Well, to be sure I've always done very much as I liked, but then I shall be free in law, you know."

Vale knew. "And what do you suppose you will do with yourself and your fortune? — a dreadful responsibility for a little woman like you to have."

"Why," smiling and shaking back her curls, "Mrs. St. Ives says I shall bestow them both upon the first man who asks for them."

"Very sharp of the auriferous lady. But shall you?"

"I don't know. That depends" — very shyly.

"Upon who it is?"

"Yes."

But now Elsie began to tremble. Her feelings were too much interested to allow her to go very far in her coquetries, — she would not have employed them at all, only that she knew by intuition how attractive she could thus be to Vale. She turned the conversation hastily to another theme.

"Do you know I am going to have a birthday festival?"

"Are you?"

"Oh, yes: and I mean it shall be a brilliant affair. I hate your humdrum parties, where all the ladies look just like the pictures in the fashion plates, and the gentlemen like the figures on the advertisements of the clothing stores. I want part of the company to come in costume. You would make a splendid brigand" —

"Thank you!"

"And Mr. Barron would do for a — let me see. Something Saxon, with his blue eyes and flowing hair. And Margaret shall be a princess."

"And you?"

"Ah! I shall not tell you that."

"Oh, you must, or I shall be *desolt*."

Vale's voice was low, and his dark, magnetic eyes thrilled her. Again Elsie made an effort to come back to unsentimental every-day affairs, plunging into the details of the arrangements with nervous haste.

Meanwhile Paul Barron had found Margaret. Gathering up the German books, he said, —

"Shall we not go down to the arbor? The noise of these chattering people can't very well be ignored."

Margaret looked up, smiling.

"Yes, if you like."

They were just starting, when old Phillips's black face looked in at the door.

"If you please a moment, Miss Margaret."



Margaret stopped. "Oh, these interruptions! But do you go on, Mr. Barron, and I will come as soon as Phillis's important business is despatched."

Paul went down to the arbor alone and sat down there to wait for Margaret.

It was one of those perfect days which follow a storm. Colossal piles of white cumuli lay at anchor in the intense, sapphire deeps of the sky, or now and then crossed the face of the sun. The wind came out of the west, now almost dying to a whisper, and now fresh and exhilarating as wine. Before him stretched the blue, endless sea. There was no sound except the thunder of the surf upon the beach.

Only a little while ago an indefinite dissatisfaction might have mingled with his pleasure in a scene so lonely and so beautiful, a sad, tender longing, a yearning for the sweet dream that haunted his youth, and which manhood had not made him forget though it had failed to realize it.

But now a soft light filled his eyes, the radiance of a joy just within his reach, to touch which he had perhaps only to reach out his hand, only to say one word. Strong, brave man though he was, assured, self-composed, and experienced, he trembled at the thought that it might be so. And then the next moment the whole world grew black. If Margaret did not love him! But he would not look upon the possibility. He would not disarm himself for what he meant to say to her by cowardly forebodings. And yet he dreaded defeat unspeakably. He tried to re-assure himself, remembering all her sweet, gracious words and ways. The tender confidence that seemed to draw her toward him but yesterday, the soft droop of her eyes, the vibrant sweetness of her voice, — had they any special significance for him? He knew himself for a strong, true man; he was sure he could be faithful, he was penetrated with a love so absorbing that it might well make him bold, — but Margaret was so good, so pure, so far removed from all the women he had known. In the reverence of his love the dear, human beauty of person and character that had won him, slipped away from his memory. Would she take him? Could he be the man of her dreams? For a moment he could almost have scoffed at his own pretensions.

"You'll touch that star, you think," he murmured sadly. Well! He would put it

to the test. If he was victor it would give him a life so full of happiness that he hardly dared think of it. The dark eyes fixed upon the sea shone with tears. The minutes passed. Presently a voice said playfully, —

"Dreaming?"

Paul looked up. She stood just under the shadow of the vines that hung drooping over the walls of the summer-house. But the smile in her eyes and on her lips died away as she looked at him. Margaret sat down very quietly.

"Yes, I am dreaming," said Paul.

"Perhaps I ought n't to have disturbed you," said Margaret, her cheeks flushing a little.

"You have not." He hesitated a moment. Then in a voice whose penetrating tenderness went down into the secret places of her soul, and compelled her to sit motionless, every sense absorbed, he said, —

"I told you I had been dreaming. It was a dream that has filled all my life. All the hard trials of my life, all my waiting and vain longing for it, have never made me forget it, or give up hoping for it. You will know what it is, — for, O Margaret, I need not tell you that I love you. Shall my dream come true, Margaret?"

He was standing before her searching her face, trying to guess the answer she would give. But he could guess nothing. She had dropped her face in her hands, and was trembling in every nerve. He stopped beside her.

"Margaret!" The world of love in his voice was too much for her to bear. She slowly lifted her face; her cheeks were a glowing crimson, and her eyes swam with bright tears. His heart leapt up exultant. A moment and he would have gathered her to his arms. But a shuffling step came along the path leading to the arbor. Presently a man came in sight, — a man in a shaggy coat, coming along in a rolling, sailor's gait. He touched his hat with a queer gesture as he came nigh, and a pair of honest, gray eyes looked up at Margaret.

"How do you do, Miss Amber? I hope I don't intrude; but the old woman, she said as how I should find you here, — and I was waitin' to speak to you about somethin' pertickler."

"Oh, it is you, Ben?" said Margaret, after a little wonder, and she put out her hand kindly.

"How do you do? I had almost forgotten you, for I don't think I have met you since you came home from your last voyage."

"No, Miss Margaret; and I knew that you was grown a lady and some folks says you are proud, but think I she won't be ashamed to do a good turn to Ben King, and he used to draw her home from school on his sled and give her slides on the pond, — not if she's ever so much of a lady. So I made bold to come, and I hope I don't intrude," he repeated, with a dim suspicion of the real state of affairs.

"Oh, no," said Margaret, smiling and blushing rosily. "You were quite right in your opinion of me. Mr. Barron will excuse us, I am sure. Ben is an old school-mate of mine," added Margaret, turning to Paul with deepening color.

Paul walked away down toward the beach. It seemed a long time to him that he sauntered there. The blue sky shone unheeded; the sea sang to unlistening ears; every nerve quivered with impatience. He took out his watch at last, and smiled at himself as he saw that only fifteen minutes had passed. But he went back to the arbor. No one was there. The chill of disappointment came over him. But Margaret would come back. He sat and waited, listlessly

turning over the leaves of the "Faust." But Margaret did not come. He knew now that there was no hope of seeing her again before dinner.

The book in his hand was a suggestion. He knew she would come back for it the moment she was released. He turned to the page where they were reading, — wrote a line swiftly on the margin. He flung down the book then, and walked off hastily in the direction of the stone house.

An hour later Vale came down the path to the arbor, whistling an air from "Don Giovanni."

"Paul!" He looked in. Nobody was there, nobody in sight. The Faust lay on the seat. He took it up carelessly, only thinking that it was Margaret's.

The book opened of itself to the accustoméd place. Paul's line met his eye. "If you can hear me kindly, Margaret, will you come here again this afternoon?"

The words burned before Vale's eyes like letters of fire. His face grew white, his black eyes glittered with dangerous lights. He shook all over in a tempest of uncontrollable passion. A jealousy cruel as the grave possessed him. With one mad, unreasonable impulse he wrenched the leaf from the book, crushed it in his hand, and walked away with pallid lips.

## A LIFE LOST, AND A LIFE WON.

BY AMANDA M. HALE.

[NO. 3. — COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

### CHAPTER VII.

#### ONLY AN INTERRUPTION.

While Paul was walking over the rocks toward the beach, Margaret turned kindly to the man near her. She was startled by the change in his face. The ruddy color was gone, and a gray pallor had settled down upon it.

"Why, Ben?" she said quickly, "what can I do for you? Is anything the matter with Kitty?"

His lips quivered. He brushed his rough hand over his bearded mouth before he answered.

"Yes, *ma'am*. There's somethin' the matter with Kitty. She's lost the lovin' heart she used to have; she a'n't the same girl she used to be, goin' round singin' from mornin' till night, and lookin' so innocent like, as if she'd never known nothin' about trouble, as she had n't. She a'n't that kind of a girl now, and the reason why is 'cause she's been led away to love Vale Amber. And I say curse the man that would be villain enough to harm *that pretty child*. I used to know him, — we've slid on the pond and gone fishin' together, and boy and man I loved him, — but now I say curse his black eyes and his false heart, that could n't let alone the innocentest little woman that ever promised a man to be true to him."

All the while he had been speaking, Margaret had been struggling for self-control. The sight of the stalwart fellow, shaken by his grief, his good, plain face grown ashy pale, his eyes wandering restlessly in the bewilderment of his sorrow, the strong hand plucking mechanically at the grass beside him, almost unnerved her.

"O Ben, I am sure Vale could never have meant so much mischief," she said, with emotion.

"Meant! it's nothin' to me what he

meant," broke out Ben fiercely. "What he's done is enough for me. She'd 'a' loved me if he'd kept away with his handsome face. Have n't I known her and loved her ever since she was a little toddler? and a'n't I been a lookin' forward all the time she's been a growin' up, and thinkin' she'd be my wife some day? And then Vale Amber comes and turns her head with soft speeches, and sets her up till she thinks 't a'n't enough to be an honest man's wife, and gets her to lookin' down on me — an' I loved her" — He stopped, striving to control himself.

"But, Ben," said Margaret tearfully, "must it go so far as this? Must it separate you? Kitty is so young."

"Young or not young, she's woman enough to know her own mind. I don't want my wife hankerin' after another man, or lookin' down on her husband. If she'd stuck to me, I'd 'a' loved her true as long as I lived, but now I don't want her."

A stifled sob closed the sentence. Margaret looked at the sturdy figure before her, and her heart overflowed with pity. His honor was just as dear to him as if he was a high-born gentleman.

"I don't wonder you think so," she said gently; "and yet, Ben, it is very beautiful to forgive, and perhaps some time" —

He interrupted: "Who says I ha' n't forgive her?" he cried angrily. "I beg your pardon, Miss Margaret. I don't rightly know what I'm sayin'. But it's no use talkin' about some time. Today and tomorrow is enough for me. If I can live through them I guess the futur'll take care of itself."

"What is going to happen tomorrow?" said Margaret anxiously.

"I'm going to sail again, that's all. Folks need n't say it's her fault," he said, the love which was still strong and true flashing through his jealous anger. "I

should 'a' gone afore long, anyway, and staid three years. Only odds 'll be I sha' n't be a hankerin' to get home agin, — like as I allays was. You see, Miss Margaret," and his voice dropped, and a touching pathos thrilled through the words, "it allays 'pear-ed as if she was beckonin' me home. Many and many's the stormy night in the Pacific, when it's seemed as though Kitty was a lookin' at me out o' the darkness, her eyes a smilin', and her shinin' hair all blowin' away from her forrard like it does sometimes, and then I've been aloft when the ropes was crackin' and the ship jerkin' about so I could hardly hold on, and I've prayed that the Lord would keep me safe for Kitty's sake, and he did. But it won't be so no more."

"Oh, I hope it will."

He shook his head drearily, twirling his hat round and round in his hands. At last he looked up, with eyes in which Margaret could only see a dumb misery.

"I was goin' to ask somethin' of you, Miss Margaret. I'm goin' away, and Kitty a'n't got no father. Folks say Vale Amber thinks a good deal of you. I've been thinkin' that if you'd speak to Vale Amber he might n't go near Kitty again. Some girls can take care of themselves, but Kitty a'n't one of 'em. She's just like a child, and wants somebody to lean on and tell her, and coax her like, and" — Overcome by the picture of Kitty's helplessness he broke into denunciations of Vale. Margaret stood quite still till the tempest of passion was spent. Then she said, —

"I don't think, Ben, that my cousin Vale is so wicked as you seem to believe. Don't be angry," — as she saw he was impatient of any defence of the man he hated, — "no one blames him more than I, but you must know that it shocks me to hear you speak so, and for my sake" —

"It was for your sake, Miss Margaret, that I come to you instead of him."

Ben turned his face upon her, and Margaret read there a look so fell that she shuddered. But the ferocious expression passed in a moment.

"O Ben! don't cherish such a feeling, — don't, I entreat you. You have been sorely wronged, I know, but try to forgive," said Margaret, tears of pity and horror falling fast. "I'll do all I can," she added. "I'll watch over Kitty as if she were my own little sister."

Ben gave her hand a strong grasp.

"God bless you, Miss Margaret. He's likelier to do it for your askin' than mine, but 't won't do no harm to say it. I knew you would: your face never told a lie yit." A momentary flush lighted up his face; but it passed, and left the gray pallor that was there before. He stood a moment longer. Then, half turning, he said, "I s'pose I may as well be goin': I've said all I wanted to say. Thank ye, Miss Margaret, and good-by."

They had walked out of the arbor, and were strolling along the path leading to the house.

Margaret put her white hand in Ben's rough, sunburnt one.

"Good-by, Ben. You spoke of the future taking care of itself. God will take care of it, and do better for you than you can do for yourself. Good-by."

Ben left her. She was close by the house now, and when she was alone stopped and looked back. Down on the rocks she could see Paul. A glow swept over her face. Must she wait for him?

"Margaret!" called somebody. Margaret looked up. Mrs. St. Ives peeped out from a window overgrown with clematis. "Mrs. Amber wants you. Nobody knows whether white powders or brown are due at twelve o'clock. Come and enlighten us." Margaret sighed and went.

Once in the house, there were as many claims upon her as if she had been ubiquitous. Mrs. Amber wanted her in the parlor, and old Phillis called her to the kitchen. With so many thoughts distracting her, she was forced to put by her meditations on the wonderful thing that had happened during the morning. Nobody guessed the meaning of the lovely glow on her cheeks and the new light in her eye, and Margaret's sweet secret was all her own.

By and by Vale went away, dinner was over, her stepmother comfortably established in the parlor, and by that time it was mid-afternoon. The house was still. Margaret ran down to the arbor, and gathered up her German books. There was a great thunder-head in the west, splendid in its purple-blackness. Would it rain? She took the books up to her room, and shut herself in, impatient to be alone. She turned over the leaves of the "Faust" tenderly, because he had touched it. Here was the place that lay open before her when he began to speak.

She remembered just how the letters looked at that instant. But the leaf was gone. The old volume was falling to pieces, she thought carelessly. And yet she would like to see that page. By and by she must look for it.

She sat in a delicious dream. It was too beautiful to be true, too strange to be believed. Would he come again this afternoon? she wondered. And how could she ever tell him? She hid her face in her hands, glowing with maiden shame. Then the blissful joy of it overcame her. It was too much for her tired heart. She cried softly, to herself, warm, happy tears. A sweet content came to her at last. The dream grew real; not yet altogether familiar, but it was growing every moment more so.

The afternoon sped. The sun whirled down the sky, and the gloom under the lindens grew deeper. Margaret went down to the parlor. Mrs. St. Ives was there in her glittering dinner dress. She could not help noticing the soft light in Margaret's face.

"You are growing handsome, my dear. Do you know?"— She interrupted herself. A figure was crossing the garden. "Why, Mr. Barron!" called Mrs. St. Ives, from the window. "Are you passing us without a word?" He came up to the window, a certain fixed resolution in his air. He looked pale and stern. "Won't you come in?"

"No, I thank you. I have business in town. Have you any commands?"

"No. Oh, yes! I should like to send a letter."

Mrs. St. Ives made a bustle to find it, and presently he was gone.

Margaret sat as if stunned. All the time he had never once glanced at her. Tea was served presently. She went through it mechanically, and after it was over took her sewing and sat down. Vale came pretty soon, quite alone. All the evening there was talking and merriment, but Margaret did not hear a word. Her thoughts were constantly traveling one round. They wondered the next morning why she was so pale and wretched; and she had to force a smile, and make a plea of headache. Indeed, her head did ache, and it was a relief when Mrs. St. Ives sent her up to lie down, insisting that she would attend to the dinner; so Margaret submitted to be sprinkled with *eau de cologne*, and scolded for not taking care of herself, without saying one word; only turning her face to the wall, and listen-

ing with strained ears the long forenoon for one voice down-stairs, one step in the hall, — for voice and step that did not come.

Mrs. St. Ives shut Margaret's door behind her as she came out, with the pleasant consciousness of having performed a good action. And now it occurred to her, while she was in the benevolent mood, why not follow up one good deed by another? She knocked at Elsie's door with this intention, and immediately entered.

The girl started up from the seat whereon she was sitting, hastily concealed a paper, and faced her, looking very much disturbed. A frown crossed Mrs. St. Ives's face, yet she smiled pleasantly.

"Excuse me, Elsie dear. I never dreamed you had any secrets."

The flush on Elsie's face paled a little. She sat down again, silently. Mrs. St. Ives came and leaned over her tenderly. Something in the strange, beautiful girl attracted her.

"I hope you are not angry, my dear."

"No!"

"Because I am afraid I shall make you still more angry. I am going to give you a lecture."

"About what?" said Elsie, with some sullenness.

"About *whom*, you should say, Elsie. It is Vale Amber."

Elsie sprang up and confronted her.

"Spare yourself the trouble, Mrs. St. Ives."

"It would spare me pain, Elsie; but I owe it to you."

Elsie glanced around, as if tempted to rush from the room, but Mrs. St. Ives held her with steady eyes.

"I would not speak, my dear, if I did not see in you a reflection of my own wayward, willful self. If I tell you a little of my life you will see why I claim to have a right to speak to you. I do not wonder that you are attracted by Vale. Such natures as yours and mine crave something brilliant and startling, and when it is combined with manners so peculiarly winning as Vale Amber's, it becomes almost irresistible. I confess that I am singularly drawn toward him, though from the first I read his character very plainly, — read it, Elsie, by the light of my own mournful experience. For it was just such a man as Vale Amber who wrecked my happiness, — not only wooing me for my fortune, and afterward de-

serting me, but he robbed me of my child, and threw me back helpless upon a desolated life. Elsie, you can trust nothing except integrity and simple goodness. No woman can safely rest her heart on anything else."

Elsie was silent and stubborn. Mrs. St. Ives had grown very pale while she was speaking, but she had preserved her quiet, self-contained manner. She went on, her eyes growing humid, and the lines about her mouth indicating pain.

"If I could show you all the misery of my past life, Elsie, — if I could fully reveal what nothing but my compassion for you would have tempted me to even partly disclose, — you would shrink aghast from the future you are promising to yourself. Won't you take my experience for your own, — learn the lesson, and miss the sorrow?"

Elsie's face was hidden, and Mrs. St. Ives heard the sound of her low sobs. She swept noiselessly from the room. Elsie's sobs gradually ceased. She lifted up her face. It was flushed and dry, and her eyes glittered. She rose and walked about the room in her agitation. She never thought of questioning Mrs. St. Ives's estimate of Vale. But she had not been trained to shrink from contact with evil, had few intuitive perceptions of the beauty of goodness, and Vale had so concentrated her thoughts upon himself, had bound her heart to him by a tie so strong, that everything else paled away into insignificance before her passionate love for him. God and goodness were far-off abstractions: Vale was a living personality, thrilling her, present or absent, by a sense of his power; his kisses clung to her lips, — his voice sounded through all prophecies of evil. Without him, heaven would be a blank: with him, there was nothing that would not be endurable. Every pulse was loyal to him; her whole being claimed him and longed for him. She never thought of giving him up. She had sobbed in a kind of helpless despair while Mrs. St. Ives was speaking, impatient at the restraints around her, — wishing passionately that she could make friends sympathize with her; but there was no thought of disloyalty to him. And yet she cried helplessly as she walked the floor, —

"Oh, what am I not giving to him? God will curse him if he is false to me!"

The words were a prophecy. But she did not know it then. Afterward she remembered them.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OVER THE MARSHES.

There was rather a silent breakfast at the stone house the next day. Vale was restless and anxious, Paul Barron grave and abstracted. They were half through the meal before either spoke. Then Paul said, —

"Vale, I am going to join that party at P——, to go out fishing in the harbor. I told Haydon I would think of it, and I've decided to go."

Vale betrayed no surprise. After a minute, he said, —

"You remember that you promised Miss Elsie you would perform at her birthday party. What were you to be? King Arthur, was n't it? You must n't fail her."

"It won't matter, — you can excuse me. Tell her — But, no, — I will be back in season: it's a whole week yet."

"Shall I drive you over to P——?" asked Vale, after a little silence.

"I will not trouble you, thank you. I'll run down to the station, and take the cars. And it's time I were going, if I mean to catch the next train." And he rose in haste.

"Don't fail to report to Miss Elsie this day week," said Vale, just as he was going.

"Miss Elsie may trust me."

Vale gave him a sharp look. There was no emphasis on the me, no intimation that the words had any hidden meaning. Yet they made Vale uncomfortable, perhaps because they suggested contrasts.

No doubt Elsie could trust him. So could any woman all her life till death. He would never fail her. And Margaret was worthy of him. Of all women, she most deserved the infinite rest and peace of such a love as Paul would give her. Vale watched him out of sight, — almost tempted to call him back. But he called himself a fool presently.

"Pshaw! What is to be will be, no matter who tries to mar. There's time enough for them yet," and he sauntered away over the marshes, whistling a tune.

In the course of the morning Margaret heard some one say that Paul Barron had left town for a week. There were questions and answers concerning the composition of the fishing party, speculations about fair weather and foul, and how it would affect them; but of this Margaret heard nothing. Paul was gone, and without another

word to her. That was the hard, incomprehensible fact around which her thoughts revolved night and day. It was as if the door of heaven had been suddenly closed upon her, just as she had caught an entrancing glimpse of the glory beyond. She had not even the poor comfort of self-deception. It was vain to hide her love from herself, for had she not fully acknowledged it in the first flush of her happy pride? And then it was hard to break down her noble ideal of him. He had seemed so noble and true, she had trusted him entirely; now to admit that he had acted dishonorably, — had sought her love perhaps to gratify an ignoble vanity! Margaret grew white and red at the thought. Her womanly pride was shocked, — her delicacy sorely hurt. She made excuses. It could not be quite so bad as that. It must have been a momentary impulse. For one moment he had stepped involuntarily over the dividing line between friendship and love. She would not have held him bound by that, not for the world. But he might have told her. He could not have guessed how she would suffer. Perhaps he would write. But the days went, and he did not.

"Heaven help me!" moaned Margaret. "I should not make excuses for him constantly if I did not love him still. O Paul, Paul! you cannot know how you torture me. You may be fickle or false, but you would never have been so cruel."

How the week passed Margaret did not know. How she should ever meet him again she could not tell. Only one thing, — she must not let him see her heart. Her pride must help her. But perhaps he would keep out of her way. Surely shame would make him. And then she remembered that Elsie depended upon him for her birthday festival, and that must bring them together. So Margaret dared not look forward. "I shall live through it somehow," she said drearily.

The warm, golden July days passed into the haze of August. Margaret went through the daily routine of her household duties, as one must, though one's heart is breaking. The last day of the week came. All day at the Amber homestead they were busy as bees. Elsie was brilliant and happy. Her luminous eyes shone with a gentle light, — her cheeks glowed with a soft crimson. She flitted gayly from room to room, as merry as a bird.

Margaret looked at her almost in wonder. It seemed so strange that any one should be gay. But she tried with gentle patience to sympathize with her, hiding her own sorrow. She grew very tired as night came, and was glad to hear Mrs. Amber say that the house must be quiet early, or her poor nerves would never be able to bear the fatigue of the morrow. Vale went from them at dusk, and an hour after the house was still. Now Margaret was free to think. The tears she had kept back all day might flow. There was nobody to see, — nobody to pity. But the relief she coveted did not come. A dull apathy had settled down upon her.

She was sitting by herself, having almost forgotten what was this weight that pressed upon her, when she heard a low knock at the front door. She went down softly, and opened it. A man stood there. She could not see his face in the gloom that lay around the door, but his sturdy figure was familiar.

"Good-evenin', Miss Margaret."

"O Ben, is it you? I thought you were at sea by this time."

"So I should have been, miss, if the ship had sailed 'cordin' to promise. But there's more things fails than a woman's word, and I've been waitin' in New York most o' the week."

He paused. At another time Margaret would have had some curiosity respecting his errand. She did not think of it now.

"So, Miss Margaret, while I was waitin' there I heerd some news about a friend of yours, — bad news 't was, for I reckon 't would puzzle a lawyer to find out any good about him, — and so, thinks I, Miss Margaret was good to me, and for her sake I'll help him out of danger. Besides, I had another reason."

Margaret had started at his first words. Everything tended to Paul. It must refer to him, she thought, and with a sickening dread at her heart, she faltered, —

"Whom do you mean?"

"Vale Amber!"

The words were hissed from between his teeth. Margaret was relieved yet roused.

"What is it about Vale? Is it anything that he has done?"

"Likely, Miss Margaret. It looks like a piece of villainy that he 's like to git brought out in. 'T was all by accident I heerd it, in a place, miss, where 't a'n't good for men to go. Howsomever, I went for oncet, and I heerd somethin' about Vale. One on 'em

said as how he must be watched, and folks a'n't watched. Miss Margaret, unless they're a doin' mischief. And I thought that seein' you 'd been good to me. I 'd come back and tell you, and you might tip him a wink so he could be off."

"O Ben, you are good" —

"You need n't praise me when I don't deserve it. The man that said he must be watched said somethin' too about the p'lice, and a chap come on with me in the cars, and stopped here, that looked to me as if he was one o' that sort. I seen him on the street sence dark."

"I will go to Vale at once," said Margaret. "Yet—what shall I tell him, Ben? Your news is so vague."

"Tell him he's suspected, and that they're on the watch for him. If he's been up to any divilry he'll take the hint and go,—and if not, there's only been a mistake, and no harm done. And tell him he'd better put the ocean between him and home." Ben drew a long breath, and added, "Then Kitty will be safe." Margaret did not notice this.

She trembled all over. Some danger threatened Vale. She must save him. That was all that was clear to her.

"I must go, Ben. I thank you,—a thousand times."

"All right, miss. 'T was for your sake I did it, and—Kitty's." He turned to go, but, looking back, whispered, "You 'd better take somethin'—a basket, maybe—for an excuse like."

Ben went away, and Margaret went in and equipped herself hurriedly for her walk. She stood at the door just about to go, when she remembered what Ben said. An excuse. Oh, she would carry old October some of the early pears and apples. She went for them, and the tall, old-fashioned clock in the hall struck eight just as she started.

It was a mile over to the stone house, with houses all the way except across the marshes; but the moon shone, and it did not occur to her to be timid. She hastened along the street, passing people who were out enjoying the summer evening, and trying to avoid recognition. Her thoughts were busy, and she had reached the house almost before she knew it. And there was Vale sitting on the broad, flat rock before the door. He threw away his cigar when he saw her figure, and came to meet her.

"Margaret! it is you? Has anything happened?"

"Not at home."

Margaret glanced around. She had not noticed that her steps were followed at a distance, and her fear was wholly undimmed.

"What is it, Margaret?" asked Vale anxiously.

"Don't ask now," she whispered. "There pears in the basket are for October."

He took the basket from her hand, and they walked forward together. Reaching the house, Margaret stepped into the little hall, and turned to Vale. The moon shone full upon them both.

"Well, little one,—what is it that makes you so white? Something that concerns me, I see."

Vale spoke lightly, but his own face was pale and working strangely.

"Is any one within hearing?" she questioned.

"No one. October is dreaming of the sweetheart he left in Congo forty years ago, and Romeo is faithful."

"Don't jest, Vale," and the tears started to Margaret's eyes, "for some danger threatens you,—something I am afraid that you have brought upon yourself. I was sent to warn you."

"Who sent you?"

Margaret reflected. That was best kept a secret. Ben's message was enough. She repeated it. If she had looked in Vale's face as she spoke, she would have seen a malignant look sweep across it,—a gleam of swift, momentary ferocity, which in tropical natures dies almost as soon as born. But Margaret's eyes were dim with tears, and she did not look. They were silent for a time. Then Margaret said, looking up,—

"What will you do Vale?"

His face was stern and determined now.

"Nothing just now. I think I see through it all, and in a little while I shall be in a position to put them all at defiance."

"Not by any wicked means, I hope, Vale!"

"That depends, dear, on what kind of a conscience a man has. You know I don't make any great pretensions in that line."

Margaret was greatly hurt, but she was too weary and too unhappy to make any expostulations. And what would it avail? She turned away. "Good-night, Vale."

He caught her hand and restrained her.



"Are you going? And I have n't thanked you."

"You need not. There is nothing I would not do for you, unless it were wrong."

"And yet you—but there's no good in talking of that. Let me go home with you."

"I'm afraid it won't be safe, Vale." He muttered an imprecation. "Besides," she added, "I don't mind going alone, indeed."

He released her unwillingly, kissing her hand.

"Go, then: I won't thank you, but, Margaret, my soul—if I have one—blesses you for your goodness."

She went away, leaving him upon the steps to watch her out of sight.

But what had changed the night so suddenly? The cloud that had hung low in the west when she started had risen, and now covered half the sky. The moon's face was obscured, and the few stars put out. Now and then red and jagged lines of fire cleft the blackness of the cloud, and the distant thunder muttered ominously.

The atmosphere was oppressive still; sometimes a breath from the sea swept across its calm, sultry as the simoon of the desert. At the left the breakers roared upon the shore; behind, the thunder rolled now in heavy volumes. The clouds broke up rapidly, for the wind was now risen; they rolled before it in angry billows, black with rain or red with the lightning. But Margaret was now half-way across the marshes. She should be sure, she thought, to reach home before the storm broke.

But it grew dark terribly fast. Yet she struggled on, trying not to see the lightning that pained her by its vividness, shutting her ears to the magnificent roll of the thunder. Surely she must be almost across the marsh now. There were the lights of the village before her. Another ten minutes passed, and then, with curdling fear that seized her and held her fast, Margaret stood still. The waves of the sea were breaking around her fast.

She knew how it was in an instant. She had lost the path in the darkness, wandered toward the sea, and was now in that part of the marshes which was overflowed with every tide. And while she stood trying to realize the situation,—trying to think what was to be done,—a great wave rushed

past her, and falling back almost drew her from her foothold.

The sky was quite black now. The lightning that seemed so dreadful a moment ago was all that could save her, if indeed she could by any possibility be saved. Only a little while ago life had looked so dark and hopeless, scarcely worth the holding; but now an intense, despairing longing seized her. The cruel waves seethed around her, hissed scornfully in her ears, flashed their ghastly foam before her eyes. A pallid picture rose to affright her,—a white, dead face gleaming from the glassy water under the cool, gray morning. Oh, must it be real? She shuddered. The mighty love of life, so strong, so irrepressible in youth, surged through all her being. The tide swept in very fast. The wind had changed, and blew now from off the sea. The pitiless flood rose higher. The wind was bringing back the shower which had passed eastward. It was Margaret's only hope, for with it came the quick-succeeding flashes of white light that lit up all the wide landscape and the measureless sea with lurid splendor.

She strained her eyes, trying with the eagerness of despair to take in the whole of her position at once. "Thank God!" she whispered, at last, and began to retrace her steps. But she was faint and chill; the weariness that had been accumulating the whole week, and had pressed heavily upon her all day, besieged her now. She went but slowly,—wandering between the flashes of light from the path, and losing herself again. The rain fell in cold sheets, and the voice of the wind and sea were a confused din. Margaret began to think it was hopeless.

Just then, Paul Barron, crossing the marshes on his way homeward, thought he heard a faint cry for help. He stopped and listened. Was it only the moan of the sea? It came again,—a distressed human creature pleading for aid. Paul rushed from the path, and followed the sound. The cry came no more, and Paul was beginning to think it had been a freak of his fancy, when a wide river of white fire streamed over his head, and in the swift illumination he saw Margaret, standing helpless, her hat thrown off, her long, soft hair sweeping about her face. He knew her, and his whole heart went out in the sudden burst of grateful feeling. It was an easy matter for his cool head and keen eyes to find their way back.

He supported her home, the riotous pulses thrilling at every word she spoke. She was quite worn out when they reached the house, and he lifted her in his arms unresisting and carried her in, laying her down upon one of the sofas in the parlor. It was dark then, and he knew by the helpless way that her hand dropped from his arm that she had fainted. He found a match, and struck a light. The beautiful face, the dearest face in the world to him, was worn and haggard. He stooped to her.

"You are mine now, Margaret, if only for one moment. O my love, my love! could you not have loved me?"

Was it the passionate, lingering sweetness of the kiss upon her lips that aroused her? The amber eyes opened, but they were dewy and dim with doubt. Paul knew where Mrs. Amber kept her wine. He went and brought some. When Margaret's eyes became clear she saw him standing by her with a glass of the liquid in his hand, its smoky yellow topaz sparkling in the light.

"Drink!"

Margaret obeyed. He sat down the glass presently, and said, standing a little way off, "Are you better?"

"Much better, thank you."

She sat up, twisting back the opulent coils of hair all wet with rain. Was it the fright and fatigue that made those sharp lines in her face, that distorted the sweet mouth, that set the eyes in purple hollows? he wondered.

He made some inarticulate exclamation. What did she mean by looking up to him in that way, — her eyes dilated with the anguish and pathos of love, — this woman who had rejected him? He walked away, put the glass in its place, and came back with a paler, sterner face.

"How did it happen?" he asked. She told him in a few words which she tried very hard to make calm. "It would not have been so bad if I had not been so frightened," she added. It was a piteous smile with which she said it, and it hurt him worse than tears would have done. He went away, and stood in the shade where he could not see her face.

"It was fortunate that I came just at that time."

Fortunate! how the cold, stunted phrase belied his feelings! His whole soul thanked God for the chance which enabled him to save her.

"Can I do anything more for you?"

The collected, calm tone chilled her. She did not guess the white heat that smouldered under it.

"No, I thank you."

"Had I not better call some of the family?"

"No. It will not be necessary."

The gentleness of her manner almost broke down his self-control. He was tempted to throw himself at her feet, and plead his cause anew. But to what purpose? If she had ever cared to soften her rejection of him, she would have granted him the interview he sought.

"You must be careful, or a sudden cold may result in fever. I hope you will be quite well tomorrow." He was gone.

Fever! Her face and hands were burning hot. She went up-stairs and to bed. But not to sleep till the night had faded into dawn. The dewy sweetness of that kiss was on her lips yet. The memory of it thrilled her. It comforted her heart so beset by doubt. She could not doubt that he loved her. She had not caught all his words, but the tender epithets had penetrated her dreamy consciousness. She would not blame him any more. It was some untoward fate that separated them. It was a blessing to know that. That she could bear. The thought that he had been willfully dishonorable had been intolerable misery. And so at last she fell asleep when the sun began to throw his shafts of scarlet fire into the chamber, a little light of joy nestling in the heart of her sorrow.

As for Paul, he went away home. He had come back to the town determined to shut his heart to her. He had put his dream to the test, and it had failed. He had been defeated where he passionately hoped for victory. Well, he could bear even this! Other men have had the same, and lived through it. He meant to come out of the conflict unscarred. He had no mind to be driven away by the frown of a woman. Until now there had been a stinging anger at the bottom of his pain. He saw it now, and was ashamed of it. It was gone tonight. It was not her fault that she did not love him. He had no right to blame her. But as he walked along he was angry with himself. He was far enough from being cured when the clinging of her hair around his face, and her eyes looking into his own, could shake his soul to

its depths. This was love. He knew it now in its sharp agony as well as its tender delight; and Paul doubted if, after all, he would have missed the knowledge.

Vale met him at the door, shook hands with him heartily, and asked, —

“Did you stop at the Ambers? Did you see Margaret?”

“Yes: I saw Margaret.”

“She is safe then. Thank Heaven! She was here of an errand, and I was fool enough to let her go home alone. I went after her, though, quite to the house. I must have missed her in some way on my return.”

Paul was silent, and they went into the house.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A NIGHT AND A MORNING.

There had been a great thunder-shower in the night, people said the next day. One of the tall lindens on the street had been cleft adown its whole length and its tough trunk separated into shreds. Some boats in the bay had been swept ashore and nearly wrecked, and signal guns had been heard from a ship in distress. The little community was quite excited. Looking from the window, Margaret saw knots of men standing at the corners talking about the storm. Little rivelets ran along by the pavements, and every leaf upon the shrubbery and trees was set with opal gems. Elsie came to breakfast looking radiant, and drank her coffee, and buttered the white rolls, as if she were wrapt in some happy dream of her own.

“Such a constitution as the child had,” said Mrs. Amber. “Now I should be so nervous I should n’t have slept a wink. And such terrible thunder, too, and such blinding lightning! Margaret, did you see it?”

Margaret said that she saw it.

“I wonder you wasn’t frightened. And yet for all it thundered so the air is just as oppressive as ever. Dear me! these peculiar electrical states of the atmosphere do affect me so. I sha’n’t be able to think of doing anything all day,” continued Mrs. Amber plaintively.

This announcement being no more than was expected was received with great calmness, and after breakfast, as soon as Mrs. Amber was comfortably established in her

rocking-chair, that asylum for invalidism and indolence, preparations were begun for the party.

The midsummer heats had withered the earlier blossoms, but along the brookside the cardinal flower still waved its spikes of scarlet flame; the evanescent beauty of the rhexia shone in the pastures, and the pyrola made the heat of the pine woods fragrant. There was the drooping, feathery grace of the soft meadow grasses, and the green redundancy of the clematis, that, like the ivy, “not a leaf will grow but thinking of a wreath.” Then in the gardens the late exotics were in gorgeous bloom; the day lily with its angel whiteness and tender fragrance; the amaryllis with its cup of fiery splendor, the creamy loveliness of the tea-rose; and of the dearer common kinds, the late blooming, odorous pinks red as rubies, blue-bells in whose honey-sweet cup the wild bee hides, the yellow sheen of velvety marigolds, and the stately pomp of the dahlia. Among these treasures Elsie’s fingers were busy all the morning. The wild flowers she carelessly tossed over to Margaret, saying, —

“You’ll know how to manage these best. Kitty Gray sent them in this morning.”

Margaret took them up gently. Poor Kitty! She had not seen her but once since that unlucky day, and then the pretty, childish face wore such a sad, perplexed expression that Margaret had no heart to speak to her of her fault.

“By the way,” continued Elsie, “Kitty ought to have been here. We shall need her voice, and I went in to the shop yesterday to speak about it, but Dolly said Kitty was going to P—— today, and could not come.”

“Did she say for what?” asked Margaret.

“Something about a person who wanted to hear her sing, a musical somebody. — I dare say you would have known the name, but I did n’t mind, I was so vexed that she could n’t come here.”

Margaret guessed what it was.

A Mr. Klenecke whiling away the summer days at the shore had accidentally heard the child’s wonderful voice and fallen in love with it. He had offered to introduce her to an opera manager with whom he had relations, and painted her probable success in such glowing colors that the family had been quite dazzled. This was the last summer, and it might be that this season Mr.

Klenecke would fulfill his promise. But Elsie went on regretting Kitty's absence, until the loveliness of a wreath that she was twining made her forget it.

"O Margaret, I do like these red roses so. To me a flower is not a flower unless it has some of the shades of red in it. A white flower is just a flower with the soul gone out of it; no more like a flower than a pale statue is like a person." And Elsie held up a long cluster of tea-roses intertwined with leaves.

Margaret looked more at her than at the flowers. She was strangely beautiful as she stood there among the spoils of the garden,—the rich crimson flushing through the transparent olive cheek, so delicate yet so warm that you hardly knew whether to call it fair or dark, her redundant curls trailing their tawny gold along her neck, and her limpid eyes full of a soft, starry splendor. Margaret thought how well the glorious, tropical flower accorded with her voluptuous beauty; the fire and the passion of the South slumbered in her eyes. Her face suggested to you the exuberance of the torrid zones; you dreamed of desert sands burning under a brassy sky, the brooding sultriness of the Indian summer, the languor of the tropic nights. Suddenly a voice behind them said, —

"Ciel!"

Elsie turned. A wave of crimson swept over cheek and brow. Then she arched her pretty brows and a smile nestled around the red lips.

"Yes, it is very pretty, but is not Margaret's the prettier?" and she laid the vivid roses beside Margaret's wild flowers. Vale put his lips to her ear, and she glowed more deeply. He came round to Margaret and took her work out of her hands.

"What clumsy little fingers! I could do better than that, I am sure. Go away and lie down, *mignon*, and try me."

Margaret accepted her dismissal with a smile. To lie down was impossible, but at least to be alone would be a relief. She went out into the hall, and there stood Paul Barron. He came toward her at once.

"Are you any the worse today for your adventure last night, Miss Amber?"

His face was quite composed, the Saxon blue eyes had a stern light in them, and the voice never varied from its even monotone. Margaret struggled for her self-possession. She knew the hot flush that came to her

face at sight of him had left it white. Her eyes drooped as she answered, —

"I am quite well today, thank you."

Not quite well did she look with her wan face and weary eyes. He looked at her a moment in silence, and then said, —

"Are your preparations nearly complete?"

"Almost. I believe, though, that Elsie has some costumes to arrange yet. I think she was wanting to see you a little while ago."

"Yes. I was going to her. I think she was not satisfied with King Arthur's helmet; and, indeed, it has a rather modern look. The evening will be very warm for the entertainment, Miss Amber."

"Very sultry indeed. You will find Elsie in the dining-room."

Paul moved on, thinking that his self-control had served him well. He looked into the dining-room. Elsie was not there, and the debris of the garden spoils lay on the table where she had thrown it. He took a new magazine, and sat down to wait her return.

Margaret went into the drawing-room. She stopped there to think whether that clinging kiss of last night was not an illusion. Could this stern, cold man have been so moved? She went up-stairs by and by. The still heat of the afternoon brooded in all the rooms. Down in the west massive purple clouds lay piled upon each other. The sun swam in a golden haze, and the whole world was steeped in the hot, slumberous atmosphere. Only the sea looked gray and cool. Margaret went into her room and began to lay out the articles for her own toilet. While she was so employed some one came slowly up-stairs and went into the room next her own. Was it Elsie? She called to her. A low, strange voice answered, —

"Don't disturb me now. Let me rest."

So Margaret moved about very still and at last went softly down-stairs.

Paul Barron was in the parlor alone. He laid down his book as she looked in, and Margaret thought that he might expect her to come in. She did so. There was no work about, no pretext to employ her hands, and she was forced to sit quite idle, steady-ing her voice to speak to him from time to time, and looking at him with her straightforward eyes.

Paul thought he had never seen her so

proud and reticent. There was the old, stately curve of the neck, the royal bearing of the head, the haughty droop of her eyes, — all *their pride intensified and heightened: but the Margaret Amber whom he had loved, the genial, gentle, tender woman, was lost forever.*

"She does not dare to unbend with me," he thought. "She fears I will say something that she must repel. But she need not fear it. I have a great mind to tell her so."

Poor Margaret! Though she sat very quietly, controlled her throbbing pulses, and made her voice even and sweet, used the proper phrases though without the least idea of what he was talking about, and put in her yes and no in the right place. That hour was a torture. She was thankful when Elsie's step on the stair gave her an excuse for rising.

"You wanted to see Elsie. I will speak to her."

She got up hastily and passed into the hall.

"Elsie!"

But looking up the next words died on her lips. Such a stony face, — all its light gone except that in the fiery, shining eyes.

"Why, Elsie, are you ill?"

A vivid color leaped to her cheeks and burned there, but all the rest of her face was deadly pale, and the corners of her mouth drooped with an indescribably sad expression.

"No. I'm not ill."

The voice had a thrilling strangeness in all its music.

"I am sure you must be!"

Looking at the face when the red color within brightened nor faded, but burned steadily under her eyes. A low laugh rippled from Elsie's lips.

"Don't be alarmed, Margaret. If I look ill it is because I am so happy. Happy! yes, I think that is it. I am sure it is. It is my birthday. Where do you suppose I shall be on my next birthday?"

And without waiting for an answer she passed into the parlor, leaving Margaret with a vague apprehension.

day wore away, and at sunset the west broke and rolled up in sky billows, gleaming silver at all over the sky. There must a breeze stirring in that upper atmosphere below was still.

The old Amber homestead and its grounds began to wear a festal air. Colored lamps were hung in the shrubbery, and hidden under the vines, and shone like stars from the gloom of the lindens; their lights glimmered weirdly through the haze. The windows of the house were all open, and the muslin curtains hung limp and motionless. Within, a pale golden glow filled all the rooms, subdued and soft. The house began to be quite full by nine o'clock. Another hour, and it had overflowed into the garden. People as they came in gave more than one look at Elsie as she stood by her mother's side to receive them. She was dressed in some silvery shining stuff; her curls gathered away from her forehead into a knot at the back of her head, and falling thence in a bright stream, now more lustrous than the dress over which they flowed. Her peculiar beauty startled people who had seen her a year before, and thought they knew her. Nobody read the secret in those eyes, or guessed why the roses burned so redly on her cheeks.

"An elfish-looking creature," said one young man to the girl on his arm. "I should be loth to have her face near me; I don't know as the hundred thousand dollars would be any temptation."

"Why, Phil Sidney! Elsie Shannon is a beauty. She's divine."

And the blue eyes smiled up into his, as if their owner would like to be contradicted. Sidney shrugged his shoulders.

"Granted, but I should prefer a human woman. I'm glad she's not in love with me. It would be like being drawn into the maelstrom."

"Fie! to quote that old fiction! Well, if Miss Shannon is not material, her fortune is so."

And the two strolled on.

Paul Barron had listened with an amused smile. Looking up, he caught Elsie's eye. It beckoned him to her.

"Does the *fete* please you?" he asked.

"Yes. Those who have taken the trouble to appear in costume have done admirably. You are my very ideal of a courtly Saxon knight."

He rewarded her by a stately bow.

"Where is Margaret?" she asked presently.

Paul noticed her suppressed agitation saw her bosom heave under the film of lace and caught the uneasy gleam in her eye

"Do you want her? Shall I try to find her?" he asked.

"If you please. No! There she is with Vale."

Vale came toward them immediately, and Paul moved away. Margaret stood where Vale had left her. Paul observed her a few minutes unnoticed. For all the *hauteur* of carriage, there was a great weariness in her manner. Paul crossed the room to her.

"Let me find you a seat, Miss Margaret."

He had offered his arm. It was easier to accept than decline, and Margaret let him lead her to a seat in the long window that opened on the garden. Then he stood by her silently. She forced herself to speak.

"Your masquerade is perfect, Mr. Barron. One would hardly know your real self under it."

"My real self!" he repeated somewhat bitterly. "How many of us show our real selves to the world? I think you are masquerading tonight."

Margaret's head lifted proudly.

"I? I have nothing to conceal."

He did not notice her words, but went on.

"You look as if you anticipated some further persecution from me. Let me assure you that you need not. That dream is over. Fortune is against me, and I do not intend to rebel. I should be glad to return to our old friendliness."

This he said, longing to be at peace with her. If he could have known how she misinterpreted it. But he could not guess what that lightning flash from the beautiful eyes meant.

"You are quite wrong, Mr. Barron," she said haughtily. "I understand you as well as you can wish."

The reply was not quite clear, but he said,—

"We are friends, then."

"I have no wish to be actively hostile," with a forced smile.

Paul looked at her. "I am very unfortunate, Miss Amber. How can I show you my contrition?"

"Only by never alluding to the subject again," she said, in a low voice.

He bowed.

"You shall be obeyed."

He left her, and Margaret was more pained than ever. All the rest of the evening her mind was a chaos of speculations. The last time for many weeks that leisure to think of her own affairs.

The trouble that then impended, when it came, dwarfed everything beside it.

The night wore on. The lamps in the garden burnt themselves out and died in gloom. The flowers drooped and the dead odors lay heavy in the air. Margaret went out into the garden; it was almost deserted now; for many of the guests had departed, and those who remained were gathered around a lady who sat at the piano. The subtle sweetness of the music floated out into the dusky night. She listened. The melody was very delicate and airy, almost joyous; but a mournful minor strain ran through it all, indicating the eternal sorrow that lies at the base of our highest joy.

Suddenly a warm hand clasped hers, and Vale bent his head near her with some careless words that were half compliment, half jest. She looked up into his face. It seemed quite white, and the dark, magnetic eyes had a softer power than usual; but that might have been the moonlight.

"You were very good, little Margaret, to come to me the other night," he said, with that gentleness that made him irresistible.

"Is the danger past, Vale?" she asked, looking at him anxiously.

"If not past, so nearly so that I can see to the end," he said, and a smile of triumph flickered in his eyes as he spoke.

"And you can see your way clear before you?"

"Yes;" and the smile stirred his lips.

"I am very glad."

"Are you?" He laughed lightly. She looked up, wondering.

"Do you doubt it, Vale?"

"I don't doubt your goodness or your interest in my miserable self. It's the one thing I cling to. What could tempt you to give me over and execrate me, Margaret?"

"Nothing!"

"Are you sure?"

"I think I am, because you know I have almost always seen you at your best, and that is what you might be,—what you will be some time, I hope."

He looked eagerly down into the pure face lifted to his.

"It would be worse than death to know you hated me, Margaret; and yet, do you know, you ought to."

Margaret shivered a little. But she used to his words, and shook off her

"Don't talk so, Vale. That is something that must never come between you

"Promise me that it shall not,—only promise me that!" he cried, his voice thrilling with passionate entreaty.

"Why, Vale?" She was greatly startled.

"Yes, I promise you."

He kissed her hand eagerly.

"Poor little innocent woman! Do you know to what you have pledged yourself?"

"To have that love and charity for you that God has for us all," said Margaret solemnly, searching his face with her eyes.

There was silence, filled only by the waves of music that drifted out from the parlor, the monotonous chant of the crickets in the shrubbery, and the leaves whispering to themselves far up in the tops of the lindens.

"Well, dear, I must go. Good-night."

She put her hand in his and repeated good-night, but he did not go.

"Margaret, I know a secret. Paul Barren loves you."

She was silent, but the hand in his trembled uneasily.

"And you love him?"

"O Vale! is this kind?"

Her voice betrayed her pain.

"He will come."

She hesitated.

"No."

"T"

"He will come back tomorrow, though," she said, "as gay as ever,—this child of strange extremes."

He did not come back tomorrow, and all her life Margaret was thankful for that parting.

An hour after midnight the house was empty. The family came together a moment in the parlor before retiring. The unnatural look the house wore still made them look strange to each other.

"Your roses are sadly faded, Elsie. I would go to bed immediately."

Elsie replied quietly, and they all separated. An hour after, while Margaret was vaguely floating on the border of dreamland, some soft lips touched her in a long, tender caress.

"Why, Elsie, not in bed yet? And how cold your hands are! Stay with me, Elsie."

"No. I only wanted to kiss you good-night."

Margaret gave back the kiss, and Elsie went away.

The night went slowly on. A wind crept up from the sea—moaned drearily in the trees. A"

one was upon the point of coming down, before anybody appeared.

They came straggling in one by one at last. Margaret first, as usual; the boys cross, as was frequently the case; and Mrs. Amber in a state of collapse, as was inevitable.

"Dear me, Phillis! these biscuits are all cold," complained Mrs. Amber, sinking back in her chair with the air of a martyr to ill usage.

Old Phillis collected her forces.

"Biscuit can't be spected to be kep warm forever, missis, nor eggs noder. Folks dat sit up till mornin' oughter take dere breafus de night aforehand," said the old woman.

"Here 's a warm biscuit, mother," said Margaret, offering a plate.

"Yes, it 's warm; but, dear me! how dry it is!"

"Has anybody seen Elsie?" asked Mrs. St. Ives, in order to make a diversion.

"Poor child! she must be very tired. Phillis, had u't you better go up to her

room and see if she wants a cup of coffee sent up?"

As Mrs. Amber's command took the form of a suggestion, Phillis stoutly stood her ground, until she caught a look from Margaret. Then she trotted off.

"I do think Phillis is getting intolerably saucy," said Mrs. Amber. "I can't put up with it much longer. If you don't give her warning, Margaret, I shall."

"But, mother" —

Margaret never finished the sentence, for at that moment the old black woman rushed in, both hands uplifted, and her face expressing the utmost amazement and dismay.

"De Lord love us, missis, but Miss Elsie a'n't in her chamber, and de bed a'n't been slep' in all right."

They all started from their seats in terror, and Mrs. Amber gave a loud shriek. Margaret ran past Phillis, and up-stairs to Elsie's room.

It was quite true. Elsie was gone!



## A LIFE LOST, AND A LIFE WON.

BY AMANDA M. HALE.

[No. 4. — COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

### CHAPTER X.

ELSIE.

The consternation in the household was indescribable. Mrs. Amber came out of her fainting fit, and sat bolt upright, with fixed eyes. All the pet phrases with which she had been used to describe her fancied ailments became too poor and weak to be of service now. She sat quite still, with white, silent lips, while Margaret and Mrs. St. Ives searched the house. When it was found that Elsie's jewels were gone, and that a part of her wardrobe had been taken, they looked at each other involuntarily, and the same word came to the lips of both.

"Vale!"

They went down-stairs, and the terrified face pleaded so eagerly that Margaret went forward, almost relieved.

"I don't think, mother, that Elsie means to come back," she said gently.

Mrs. Amber shook her head, and did not seem to understand.

"I think that she has gone away to be married."

The white lips opened, and a weak, quavering voice replied,—

"Married? That means that I've lost my only daughter,—that she's left her mother, and gone to some one else. Some one? Why, Margaret, what are you thinking of? There was nobody whom Elsie cared for, nobody good enough for her."

"You forget Vale."

"Vale Amber! Heaven help us! Has my child married him?"

If Vale had stormed Mrs. Amber's consent, she would ultimately have yielded under the presence of his strong will, and the magnetism of his presence; but coming upon her all at once, it shocked and alarmed her. She leaned back in her chair, and cried hopelessly.

Margaret started up, after a few moments' ineffectual soothing.

"Why am I delaying? It may not be too late to stop it now. But what shall I do?"

Strange to say, the sensible suggestion came from Mrs. Amber.

"Send for Mr. Barron. He will know if Vale is gone. He will know what is best. Ask him to come at once."

Margaret despatched a messenger in haste, and while they waited, Mrs. Amber went over a thousand probabilities, suggested a multitude of chances, and grew more and more wretched every moment. They were all startled when Paul Barron entered suddenly.

"Vale is missing?" said Margaret.

She had no need to ask, for his face betrayed it.

"And Miss Elsie?" he said.

"Yes."

"Paul drew a long breath.

"It is as I feared, then."

"You feared it, and you never told me? You let that villain lead away my innocent child, and never did anything to prevent it! And you too, Margaret. I'm sure you ought to have been in her confidence,—two girls like you. I wish Vale Amber had died, before he had seen my poor girl,—the black-hearted villain!"

It was useless to reason, more than useless to tell her that she had tacitly encouraged Vale, and ruined Elsie by her weakness; and they all kept silent till the stream of complaint had run itself dry. Then Margaret, looking at Paul, said, "What can be done?"

He answered immediately, "I will go to P—. It is not a telegraph station, I believe, but I can inquire there, and send a despatch from the next station. But I don't think that it will stop the marriage."

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"What good will it do, then?" asked Mrs. Amber querulously.

Paul turned to Margaret.

"Do you know whether Vale was in need of money?"

Margaret grew pale, remembering all she had known within a week. She told him briefly. Paul's face rapidly cleared up.

"My surmise, then, is that he was in some desperate need,—that in some way his safety depended upon having the control of a large sum; and that this was the reason he could not brook the delay which would follow a public engagement. If this is the case, he will of course possess himself of all the ready money that he can get hold of. Mrs. Amber, how was Elsie's fortune invested?"

"O dear me, I don't know. I never understood about such things, and I have no head for figures; but there was a good deal in different banks, and there were stocks and bonds. O Mr. Barron, I can't tell you. But Mr. Henshaw, the lawyer in New York, knows all about it."

"It would be best to go to New York at once, then," said Paul, turning again to Margaret.

It seemed so strange to have to depend upon him, and Margaret's face flushed at the thought. But she assented.

"Well, then, if you will allow me to act for you, I will telegraph to this Mr. Henshaw, and follow my despatch as soon as I shall have learned all I can at P——," still addressing Margaret.

"You are very good, Mr. Barron"—She hesitated.

"Margaret," cried Mrs. Amber, "why are you detaining Mr. Barron? If he is so good as to take the trouble, I'm sure, as a friend of Vale's, he is the most suitable person," she added, with great confusion of ideas.

Paul smiled to himself, thinking that Vale would hardly look upon his interference as an act of friendship. But he rose to go, and just as he did so, Phillips came in, her former agitation still showing itself, even in the kinks of her hair, which stood out in little hard, gimlet-like twists all around her head.

"Here's somebody, miss," breathlessly, to Margaret.

She went forward. A bent, feeble figure, beside a childish one.

"Why, Dolly, is it you?" leading her

hastily to a sofa. "You know something about Elsie, don't you? I am sure you would never have come, unless you did," said Margaret eagerly.

The girl pushed back her bonnet, and smoothed the thin hair around her hollow temples.

"Kitty does, but she would n't come without me. Tell Miss Margaret, Kitty." And Dolly drew the cloud away from Kitty's face.

Margaret started. Poor little Kitty's childish, innocent beauty was all gone. The low, white, smooth forehead was corrugated as by the cares of years, the blue eyes looked faded and vacant, the cheeks that had been so plump and pink were white and hollow, and the sweet mouth looked as though it would never smile again. Margaret looked at her a moment pityingly, before she said,—

"Tell us all about it, Kitty."

Kitty began shifting her eyes uneasily, from one to another, and twisting her cloud into a rope.

"I went down to P—— yesterday, Miss Margaret, and that was the reason why I could n't come to Miss Elsie's party, for Dolly would make me go, because the gentleman that wanted to hear me sing was going away; and so I went, and I sung to him, and then I went back to Mattie Ryan's, —that's my cousin, you know,—and she went with me to the dressmaker's because I did n't know the way; I never was there but once, and that was with Mr. Vale, and I'm sure I did n't think there was so much harm in it," said Kitty, crying.

"Try and tell us about Miss Elsie," said Mrs. St. Ives. "Did you see her?"

Kitty looked at the lady rather vacantly, and twisted the cloud harder than ever.

"Let her tell the story in her own way," said Margaret. "Mattie went with you to the dressmaker's, Kitty, and then"—

"We went to the dressmaker's," said Kitty, quite at ease, now that the thread of her story was re-united, "and she cut my dress, and then I was coming home in the night train, but the shower came up, and Mattie made me stay all night. So I got up early to come home this morning, and Mattie went to the depot with me; but the train was n't ready, and we walked up and down the platform, seeing the people that was going off in the New-York train. There was lots of them, and they was all in a hur-

ry, and all at once I saw Mr. Vale"—Kitty burst into a sob here—"and Miss Elsie. She was holding tight to his arm, and her veil was down, but I could see her eyes through it, and I knew 't was her curls,—such lots of 'em she had, you know. And the big dog Romeo was with them."

"Well," said Margaret gently. Kitty looked confused again. "What did Vale and Elsie do?"

"They got into the car, and it was very full. I could see, because the crowd pushed us up close to it, and I heard Mr. Vale ask a gentleman to change seats with them, because, he said, his wife did n't like to ride backwards. And I saw him place her shawl for her, and then he sat down beside her, and the bell rung, and they whistled, and the cars started. And then I came home and told Dolly, and she made me come here." And Kitty broke down in a flood of tears.

Paul drew out his watch.

"The train for P— goes in ten minutes, and I must be off."

He went, and presently Dolly got up to go. Kitty reached up, when no one was looking, and drew Margaret's head down.

"Do you think he loves her?" she whispered.

"I am afraid not, Kitty."

Kitty's face brightened for an instant, but the light quickly faded to a touching sadness.

"I thought he loved me," she whispered; and the blue eyes grew pathetic, and the little hands clutched Margaret's dress. "He kissed me and called me darling, and gave me a bracelet; and O Miss Margaret, what could I think but that he loved me, and wanted to marry me?"

Kitty's face grew old and gray as she said this, and she turned wearily away, as if the weight of a long, sorrowful life now rested upon her slender young shoulders.

It was a dreary, anxious day. Mrs. Amber kept all the time picturing Elsie's return. She was sure she would come back. And she thought she might perhaps some time forgive Vale, though it was certainly very cruel in him to take Elsie away so. And then Mrs. Amber cried, and said she had meant to have a grand wedding when Elsie was married, and now what would people say? And then she wondered if they would not come back in season for a reception; in that case, it might be supposed that they

married in a freak of haste, and went on their bridal tour. Nobody ever need know the truth.

Filled with the consolation which this little scheme brought her, Mrs. Amber dropped off into a nap, and forgot her troubles. Dr. Godfrey was there when she awoke, and, unbeknown to any one, Mrs. Amber took him into her confidence, and was greatly relieved by so doing. Margaret went about, doing what was to be done, mechanically, and longing for news. Toward night a note came from Paul Barron, very brief:—

"Vale and Elsie were married this morning. I have seen the clergyman. I start in the next train."

This was all that could be expected for several days. Indeed, it was almost a week before Paul came back. The house had seemed very quiet and dull in the interim. Nobody suspected before what a deal of sunshine had flowed from Elsie's presence. They all missed her light step on the stair, her smooth, ringing voice; even her old imperiousness had owned its charm. Margaret had no spirits. Whenever she was alone, the forced smile faded from her lips, and her eyes grew sad. Mrs. St. Ives caught the prevailing sombre tone, and her gay sallies were less frequent and sparkling.

Doctor Godfrey was Mrs. Amber's sole consolation. Long after, she was accustomed to say, "I don't know how I should have lived through those dreadful days, if it had n't been for the doctor." As he took her mother off her hands several hours a day, Margaret was sincerely grateful, and the pleasantest sight of those sad days was his burly figure and pompous gait as he rolled up the walk. So palpable was the gloomy atmosphere that enveloped them, that old Phillis grew permanently amiable, and used to say to Margaret, in a solemn tone,—

"'Pears like, miss, somebody's dead. I hears sumfin' in de air, I does,—like enough it's sperrits."

"I guess it is the September wind, Phillis."

Margaret herself heard it every night, and thought the wind had never before such an eyry sound. The brightness of the summer had suddenly faded, gray clouds daily drifted over the sky, and foretokens of the fast-coming autumn were everywhere visible.

Paul Barron returned at last, coming in

upon them at nightfall, suddenly, travel-stained, and looking fatigued and worn.

"I need not ask. You have nothing pleasant to tell us," said Margaret, after a look at his face.

"No, nothing pleasant. I hope it may be a relief to you to know the worst."

He paused.

"You saw Mr. Henshaw?"

"Yes, I saw him, but Vale had seen him before me. It would have made no difference, however. It is a great pity the property was not secured to Elsie in some way. Now there is no help. Vale has it all at his own disposal."

There was a long silence. Even Mrs. Amber ceased her moaning. A little while after, when they were alone together, Margaret said, —

"Do you think that was Vale's motive, — to get the property? Did you hear anything?"

"I heard enough to surprise and shock me, Miss Amber. I heard the epithet swindler fully applied to Vale. I believe his liabilities are immense, and he would have been arrested if this money had not passed into his hands just as it did. Now those who are most interested wait to secure all that is possible, — but the blow still impends."

"But he may escape it?" said Margaret, pale and trembling.

"By leaving the country? Yes; he will do so, I think. In that case, will Elsie cling to him, or come back to you?"

"She will cling to him, unless he casts her off. She loved him, I know," said Margaret, in a low, thoughtful tone.

"Did he love her, do you think?"

Margaret crimsoned slowly under his steady eyes.

"I am afraid he did not."

"Poor Elsie!"

Paul went back to the stone house, feeling just as he did when their interest in Kitty's escapade had drawn them together. All the hauteur and coldness had melted away from Margaret's manner, and she was the same tender, graceful woman who had won him to love her. He tried to blind himself to the glamour which her presence threw around him, but quite in vain. The thought of going away from her was too painful to be entertained, and yet he had plainly no right there now, since his host had left him.

"For pity's sake, don't think of it, Mr. Barron," cried Mrs. Amber, when his departure was suggested. "How could we do without you? You can speak to Mr. Willis, — Captain Amber's man of business, — and he will give you leave to stay, — won't he, Margaret?"

"Won't he do what, mother?" said Margaret, who had only heard Mr. Willis's name.

"Give Mr. Barron leave to stay at the stone house. He's your Uncle Marmaduke's agent, you know."

"I think he will, mother," said Margaret.

"I don't see why you don't urge Mr. Barron to stay?" pursued her mother peevishly; "so very good as he has been to us, — and if we should hear any news of poor Elsie" — And Mrs. Amber's sentence ended in tears.

"I have no right to suppose that my wishes could influence Mr. Barron," said Margaret, in a clear, calm voice.

Paul was very much annoyed. He had felt that he would stay, if Margaret would say but one word for it. Now he was tempted to go, and leave her in her coldness and pride. But if he went, he should never come back, never see her again; and the thought of going thus placed such a dead blank wall before his whole future, that he had hardly courage to face it.

"Why should I go?" he asked himself.

"Why not give myself this great pleasure as long as I can?" He called it pleasure, but the society of Margaret gave him a sensation so vivid that he hardly knew whether it was most pleasure or pain.

He spoke to Mr. Willis, and that gentleman was only too glad of a tenant for the stone house.

"When Captain Amber comes, he will like to see a light burning in his window," said Mr. Willis.

So Paul set up his easel, and kept the light at the stone house for the old sea-captain who never came. Old October could hardly be reconciled to the change. Nobody was quite equal to Massa Vale, and it was hard to forgive Paul for not being Vale. But when the nights grew long and cold, and autumn put off her misty robes, and the cold November sky bent clear and cold over the town, and the cliffs by the shore, and the gray, wintry sea, even October found Paul's presence a comfort.

It was very quiet at the Amber homestead

now. Paul Barron was almost the only visitor, and his coming was the great event of the day. Margaret's old occupation of teaching Kitty failed her now, when she would have been glad of its relief, for the Grays had all gone off to New York, under the protection of the famous manager, and Dolly wrote letters about Kitty's wonderful success, and it seemed as though fortune had turned in favor of these humble Grays.

One day a letter came from Kitty herself. It was inconsequent, like the writer, and had some childish affectations, but through it all there breathed the newlyawakened woman's heart. Margaret gave the letter to Paul. He read and returned it, saying, —

"Little Kitty's soul came to her in a great tempest, and the scars of the storm are upon it yet. She is like a rose, impatiently blown open before its time, and trembling under the violence."

Margaret smiled.

"You see how kindly she speaks of Ben, — the brave, true heart which she wounded so."

"Yes. Her imagination has transfigured the sturdy fellow, and she just begins to comprehend his royalty. I hope he will come back to her, and that they will be happy yet."

"I don't think it likely. We lineal descendants of the Puritans are an obstinate kind of people."

"Are you?" with a curious look.

Margaret knew that she changed color, and was annoyed by the knowledge.

The autumn grew old. The lindens dropped their faded golden leaves, and they lay in drifts along the paths. The long evenings came on, and would have been almost intolerable had it not been for Paul. But one day there came a storm, a drifting tempest of rattling sleet, intermingled with snow-flakes. The wind howled fearfully, and the great branches of the trees swayed and creaked in the pitiless blast. At sunset the sea was a terrible sight, — one vast world of seething, tossing, ghastly foam. The breakers thundered in upon the beach, and the spray, swirling through the air, fell in cold salt drops upon the rocks that all summer had lain high above the flood. A brassy gleam shone out of the west, and lit the desolate scene for a moment, and then the clouds settled lower, and the wind gathered new force, and the icy sleet drove fast before it.

"There is no prospect of Mr. Barron to-night," Margaret thought.

She took her sewing, and sat down. Mrs. Amber, at the further end of the room, had gone off into a doze, and Mrs. St. Ives, having read her into this somnolent state, was writing letters. To Margaret the house seemed preternaturally silent. Nothing could be heard except Mrs. St. Ives's pen upon the paper, the clatter of the sleet upon the panes, and that fierce wind, driving at every door and window. Margaret found it terribly lonesome. She laid down her sewing presently, and took a book. But her senses, nervously alive to every noise, by and by caught the sound of wheels, that seemed to stop just in front of the house. They had fallen into the habit of watching and listening, of late, and Margaret's ear, grown acute, detected the sound of footsteps upon the walk.

She glanced around. Mrs. Amber still slept, and Mrs. St. Ives did not look up, and Margaret went swiftly out of the room. She opened the outer door before any one had time to ring, and a cloaked and hooded figure, the snow lying in all the folds of her garments, stepped in. Some eyes, gleaming strangely from a hollow, worn face, looked up at Margaret.

"O Elsie! is it you?"

No answer in words, but she sank into Margaret's arms, and sobbed — dry, tearless sobs — upon her bosom.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ONE OR TWO SURPRISES.

They went about all the next day, and for many days after, with quiet steps and subdued voices. A smile would have seemed sacrilege in the presence of the pale creature who lay upon the sofa, with bright, unweeping eyes, that followed them everywhere. It was not apathy, — that she suffered keenly, they all knew, — but day after day that stony calm sat always on her face. The "loose, soft, impracticable curls" were compressed into a close knot; the beautiful, delicate, veined temples were pinched and sunken; the mouth was close shut, and neither spoke nor smiled. Only one day she said to Margaret, without the least premonition, —

"He never loved me, Margaret."

Margaret leaned down, and stroked the white forehead, saying, —

"Poor child! poor child!"

Elsie did not mind the tears that were falling upon her face, but went on in the same weird voice, empty of all feeling.

"And when I told him I would come home, he said I had better come."

"Where is he, Elsie?"

But Elsie only stirred slightly, turned her face away, and said, —

"I don't know."

This was the end of her confidence. The gleaming eyes came to haunt Margaret like a spectre. This was worse than anything else had been. Margaret broke down at last, under the accumulation of troubles, and one day there was an excitement in the house, a hurried sending for the doctor, and then it was known that the patient heart and active brain which had thought, felt, planned, and worked for everybody, must be idle for many weeks. Paul Barron came every day, his anxiety revealing itself in the face that grew sterner and paler as the crisis approached. One morning Mrs. St. Ives came down to the parlor to see him. He thought her looking worn and fatigued.

"My dear Mrs. St. Ives, you must have help. You must not have all these people on your hands."

"My hands are sufficient, Mr. Barron. What I want, is some one to divide the responsibility and care. It seems as though I should go wild, seeing that ghostly girl lie there, refusing to eat, as silent as the grave, and her great eyes burning into your very soul. The doctor says she must be roused."

"But how?"

"I have a plan. I am going to frighten her about Margaret; and, indeed, Mr. Barron, there is great danger." Paul turned away his face, — a movement that did not escape Mrs. St. Ives. "If she cares for anybody except that unhappy man, it is Margaret."

"What does Mrs. Amber say of it?"

"Mrs. Amber! I am surprised at you, Mr. Barron. I never thought of consulting her. She is just a large, old baby."

Paul could not help smiling.

"You can't expect me to be as good as Margaret," she said, noticing it. "Very few people are; and you see what has come of her goodness. I shall never fall a victim

to the sweetness of my temper, I am sure. But what do you think of my plan?"

"It is a rough medicine, Mrs. St. Ives; but it is worth trying."

Mrs. St. Ives tried it that very afternoon. Standing by Elsie's sofa, she said, —

"Elsie?"

No answer.

"Elsie," she continued, "did you know that Margaret was very ill? I want you to go and stay in her room, and take care of her, tonight."

Elsie's eyes closed wearily, as if overpowered by the thought.

"You will, of course?"

"I cannot: I am miserable."

"Oh, very well, then. If she dies, it won't matter to you, of course. You can say, that, though Margaret had always been tender to you, you let her die, because you would not lift a finger to help her."

Elsie got up from the sofa, and said in a low, excited voice, —

"Margaret is not going to die?"

"The doctor says she will unless she has excellent care."

Without another word, Elsie went out of the room, and up into Margaret's chamber. Mrs. St. Ives followed. Elsie stood and looked at her a moment, the tears surging to her eyes; then dropped upon her knees by the bed, and cried aloud. She staid by Margaret that night, taking her place as by a natural right.

Mrs. St. Ives watched her closely for a day or two, and was then satisfied that she could be trusted.

By the time Margaret was convalescent, Elsie was another creature; still very pale and quiet, but no longer the white spectre that she had been.

To Margaret the illness was a new and strange experience. After she grew better, she used to lie and listen to the noise downstairs, to the music of the bells in the street, and the voices of the people as they stopped to talk under her window, with a strange sense of how all the life of the world was going on without her, and would have gone on just the same, if she had been buried under the January snow. And feeling this, the yearning that no one can wholly stifle, for some one to love her best, to love her living, and mourn and miss her dead, grew to a craving hunger, that always fed upon itself, and grew with every day.

Then it was a new sensation, after she

got down-stairs, to lie quietly while others worked, and sit with her idle hands before her, and remember the busy life that now seemed so far away that it might have belonged to another, and not to herself.

"You don't know how delicious it is to be idle," she said, one day.

"That from you, who were one of the busy bees?" said Paul, who usually spent the afternoons with them.

"Yes. But I used to think the existence of a drone had its advantages."

"So has a mummy's."

Margaret laughed. It was good to him to hear her.

"Yes. Do you know I feel as if I might have slept three thousand years? But I know I shall get to the end of this shortly, and take up my burden again. I got as tired of it as did Christian. Yet it would be wicked to wish that I had laid it down forever."

Her voice had grown very sad as she spoke. Paul looked at her a moment, his countenance changing fast. He left them soon after. Mrs. St. Ives had listened to the conversation, and drew her own conclusions. The next day they were alone for a moment, and she astonished him by saying, —

"Mr. Barron, what has come between you and Margaret?"

He flushed a little, but kept his composure.

"Miss Margaret and I are friends, — at least not enemies," he added, remembering what she said to him.

"A paltry evasion, Mr. Barron. Things go contrary, as Mrs. Grummidge says. Here a marriage takes place that makes us all miserable, and another makes us miserable by not taking place."

"You are mistaken, Mrs. St. Ives. Miss Amber was not made miserable by any such thing."

He walked to the window, and looked out steadfastly, but as there was nothing to be seen but a wood-sled going by, Mrs. St. Ives could not suppose him to be much interested in the view.

"It cannot be that she refused you?" she said abruptly."

Paul looked out of the window a moment longer, then came back, and faced Mrs. St. Ives.

"You may know, if you care to, Mrs. St. Ives. I have no shame about it. I count

it a greater honor to have been refused by Margaret, than accepted by any other woman."

Mrs. St. Ives could not disguise her astonishment.

"What could she have been thinking of?"

Paul smiled grimly.

"Thank you. Suppose we talk of something else now."

He went back to the stone house presently, strode up into his studio, and went to work with desperate earnestness. The door opened, and October's woolly head was thrust in.

"Letters for you, massa!"

Paul was about to toss them aside, being in no mood just then for such trifles as letters; but the superscription of one of them caught his eye. He knew it instantly for Vale's free, elegant hand. He tore it open. But this was a queer letter, a very queer letter, indeed. Out from the envelope fell a printed leaf, — crumpled, soiled, and yellow with age. The odd, cramped German text ran into an indistinguishable blur before his eyes, but two lines on the margin, in his own handwriting, were as distinct as if they had been letters of fire.

Paul whitened to the lips, and his face grew set and grim; it was a whole minute before the natural color came back again, and his eyes softened, and his fixed features relaxed. Then he trembled; strong, self-controlled man as he was, he shook from head to foot.

In a moment he took his hat, and started out, passing old October in the door, who cried out in dismay, —

"Good Lord, Massa Paul, what's de matter?"

The words recalled him to himself so far, that he walked on at a more decorous pace, but he crossed the marshes, and went through the street, meeting people whom he knew, without being in the least aware that he had ever seen them before. Straight up the path he went, in at Mrs. Amber's door, and so on to the parlor, without ever stopping to ring. Margaret sat there in the easy-chair, and Mrs. St. Ives sat beside her. Mrs. St. Ives gave him one look, and then went quickly out of the room. Margaret half rose from her chair, startled and astonished, but his voice arrested her very heart pulses, and her whole soul listened.

Margaret, did you ever see this before?"

She gazed at a yellow, crumpled paper, and presently her eyes lighted, and she said, —

"It is a leaf from my 'Faust,' is it not? Oh, I remember now that one was lost!"

Then as she saw the lines Paul had written, the rosy blushes leaped to her pale face, and her eyes drooped beneath those steady, eager ones that searched her heart.

"No, I never saw that before," in a whisper.

His arms were around her, her face uplifted to his, by some strange power, and his voice besought her by a passionate tenderness that was almost too much to bear.

"Do you love me, Margaret? Think how much I have suffered, and tell me quick."

Low, but sweet and clear, the answer came.

"I love you, Paul!"

A long silence followed; wordless caresses, that measured a joy too deep for speech. At last Margaret said softly, still hiding her blushes from his eyes, —

"I think I can guess how it was! It was Vale, was it not? Do you forgive him?"

"My darling, I never thought of it, — my happiness was so overwhelming. But you must pay me for it, Margaret. You must not make me wait long for my wife."

The tears came to her eyes.

"Somebody else has suffered too, Paul!"

His face darkened.

"Dear, I see. What must you have thought of me?"

"Nothing so very bad, after the first, — for I was sure you loved me, you know, from that night."

"When I brought you home from the marshes? Ah, I guess it. You made believe insensible, and beguiled me into kissing you."

"I would have been quite justified in doing so, since you proved that you were not to be trusted; but I did n't."

"Why did n't you come to me, Margaret?"

"How could I? I made all sorts of surmises. I guessed that some old lady-love had asserted her claim, or — I don't know what I did n't fancy."

"I think I know now what made you so pale and unhappy, all those miserable days. You wanted me, did n't you, Margaret?" in tender exultation.

"Don't triumph! Yes, I wanted your love. Was it strange? Nobody else ever loved me very much."

"Vale loved you. I think his love for you was the one undefiled thing in his character."

"Poor Vale!"

"But how long he kept you from my arms."

"Pity him, Paul. Remember he can never have any happiness like ours."

"I think I'll make conditions, dear. When we are married, I'll promise to sweep my heart clean of the very last feeling of anger."

"Ah, you are not so niggard as that."

"Yes, I am. I'm a miser. I'm avaricious. I want you, dear."

Somebody opened the door, and came in softly.

"It is all settled?" said Mrs. St. Ives, looking at them with humid eyes. "Because I am tired of standing guard at the door."

"You've done your duty, Mrs. St. Ives, and to reward you, I'll tell you a secret."

"How stupid you must think me, Mr. Barron! Just as though I have n't already guessed it."

"Oh, but you have n't. Margaret and I are to be married in a month."

Margaret exclaimed.

"Don't contradict me. Haven't you just renounced self-government?"

"But I did n't know you were to be a despot!" protested Margaret.

"All men are, my dear," said Mrs. St. Ives gravely.

And so they hid their great happiness with playful words, till laughter melted into tears.

Paul walked swiftly home that night, at peace with himself, and all the world, a sense of reverent thankfulness mingling with his triumphant joy. His heart ran over with good will, and he spoke to old October, who was on his knees blowing the studio fire, with a beaming cordiality that surprised him.

"What does ye want for supper, Massa Paul?"

"Anything, — it is no matter what," said Paul, his face all alight.

October shuffled out of the room.

"Bress my old soul, I neber see anybody so queer. When he went away, he looked as ef he'd seen a ghost, and now 'pears like he come straight from heaven."

Mrs. Amber received the news with great composure.



"I hope you won't put off the marriage, Margaret. I never did approve of long engagements."

"But, mother, I could n't think of leaving you" —

"Now, Margaret, don't worry me in that way. I should n't have proposed your being married if I did not know I could do very well without you," said Mrs. Amber, with quite unconscious self-betrayal. "I shall have some one to take care of me, who understands my particular constitution, and knows just how to manage it."

"What do you mean?" said Margaret, in great surprise.

"And being a doctor, the medicine and everything will come handy, and it won't be so expensive, and I think we shall get along nicely," said Mrs. Amber, softly crying, which was her way of expressing satisfaction.

Margaret sat in silent amazement for a moment. Then she said, —

"Can you mean that you are going to marry Dr. Godfrey?"

"Can I mean it? Why, any one would think I had no right to get married," said Mrs. Amber, flushing, and stopping her tears. "I must say, Margaret, I call that very unfeeling, after all that I have suffered. You want to be married yourself, and I should think I had just as much right. But that's the way with young people, — they never think" —

"Indeed, you mistake me quite, dear mother," interrupted Margaret. "I could n't help being surprised, I think, but I am sure I am quite willing," and Margaret laughed a little, adding, "You have been married a good deal, and ought to know; and I really think your example takes away any reluctance I had" — and at that, Margaret stopped hastily.

But Mrs. Amber failed to detect the satire, and went on to discuss future arrangements with a great deal of complacency.

Elsie had listened to all in silence. That night she tapped at Margaret's door, and coming in at her bidding, said gently, —

"I did n't know but you might want to be alone with your thoughts."

"You may share them, Elsie dear," Margaret returned, looking rather sadly at the changed face.

Elsie caught the look, and said quickly, —  
"Don't pity me, Margaret. I am going to live for other people the rest of my life,

and I don't want you to delay your marriage. What Dr. Godfrey cannot do for mother I can, and for the rest, too."

"But, darling," looking at her pityingly Elsie laid her head upon Margaret's shoulder, and whispered softly, —

"God takes care of such as I, and O Margaret, he will help me to teach my little child to be what his father ought to have been."

The next morning they were all in the parlor together, and Margaret was looking furtively out of the window from time to time, to see if Paul was not coming up the path. Instead of Paul, appeared Mr. Willis at the gate, and Margaret exclaimed, —

"Why, here is Uncle Marmaduke's agent. There must be some news of him. Phillis, let him in directly."

He was a tall, spare man, with a cadaverous face, and gray eyes that seemed to be on the lookout for a client.

"How do you do, Mrs. Amber? I hope you are as well as usual, madam," he added, after shaking hands with the rest.

"I am as well as usual, thank you, but my constitution is very frail," moaned Mrs. Amber. "Indeed, so delicate have I always been, it is quite a miracle that I am living; and I am sure I should not have been, if I had n't been blessed with a physician who understood my idiosyncracies."

"It is such delicate persons as you, madam, who astonish us by living oftentimes to a good old age, while stout, healthy persons like myself, commonly drop off suddenly. In the midst of life we are in death."

Mrs. Amber, who at first had resented the idea of her living to old age, was so overcome by the solemnity of his manner, that she cried out directly, —

"Dear me, Mr. Willis! what has happened?"

"Have you any bad news of Uncle Marmaduke?" said Margaret's clear, sweet voice.

He turned toward her.

"You have guessed the unhappy truth, my dear Miss Amber. It is my painful duty to announce the decease of Captain Amber in the West Indies."

There was a dead silence for a moment, and then Mrs. Amber began to cry.

"How very sudden! Just like my poor husband, — Mr. Amber, I mean, — and your father died suddenly, too, Margaret, — I mean Elsie," said Mrs. Amber, getting con-

fused, and losing herself in memories of her lost spouse. "I was sure there was going to be a death in the family, — or else a marriage, and this it is, — Captain Amber's death, Mr. Willis, because I heard the death-watch ticking in the wall, — you remember, Margaret," —

"Yes, mother. Do you know the particulars, Mr. Willis?"

Mr. Willis did. He gave them minutely. But when all questions had been asked and answered, the lawyer's business was not yet completed.

"You are aware, I suppose, that Captain Amber had a handsome property, Mrs. Amber."

"We suspected it, but did not know much about Captain Amber's affairs. He was, you know, rather odd, — if you 'll not think it wicked for me to say it of a man who has just died," said Mrs. Amber. "We were not benefited by his wealth."

"He was peculiar, madam, but it seems that he has left the bulk of his property to your family. There is a handsome legacy to Vale, Miss Margaret has the stone house and ten thousand dollars, and the rest is divided among your boys, Mrs. Amber."

The weight of this good fortune rested on them somewhat heavily for some time after Mr. Willis retired. *Nobody spoke.* At length, Mrs. Amber said, —

"Margaret, do you think it will be necessary to postpone my — I mean your marriage on account of your uncle's death?"

Margaret brushed away a few indignant tears.

"I think that Uncle Marmaduke would not be grateful for any consideration that did not come from real feeling," and she went hastily out of the room.

Poor Uncle Marmaduke! Margaret had known him for a rough old fellow, who hid away his heart so closely under a brusque exterior, that not many people suspected its existence, and even she had rather taken it for granted, than believed in it upon evidence; but she loved him because he was her father's brother, and had dutifully written to him from time to time. Her regret that he should have died so far away, brought warm tears to her eyes, and yet she called herself wicked, because her thoughts would turn to her own irrepressible gladness, and would speculate upon the difference this fortune would make to herself and Paul. *Herself and Paul! a sweet colloca-*

*tion of words that made her blush rosily.* She heard his step at the door presently, and went to meet him, drawing him into the dining-room.

Paul began at once upon the subject that lay nearest his heart. Margaret listened quietly, and he was beginning to gather discouragement from her silence, when she said, —

"You are n't very rich, are you, Paul?"

He smiled, but looked surprised.

"Mercenary woman! why do you ask?"

"Oh, I want to know!"

"I dare say you supposed that money was an indigenous production of New England."

"No, for I never found any; but are you rich?"

"No, I am not; I am poor, but my profession gives me a good income, especially," and he laughed, "when I attend to it as closely as I have of late, and we shall do very well."

"I don't doubt it, but would n't it be pleasant to have ten thousand dollars, for instance, and a house to live in?"

"Very pleasant. Why, that would be a fortune for simple people like you and I."

"And you could go to Italy?"

"I think I shall be content to stay at home with you. But what do you mean? Your eyes are tell-tales."

"Have they told you that I've just had a legacy of ten thousand dollars and the stone house?"

He started a little.

"Is this true?"

"Quite true."

"How did it happen?"

"My Uncle Marmaduke is dead."

After a while, Paul said, —

"Well, my darling, I don't pretend that this is not a good thing."

"I have something else to tell you, too!" said Margaret gayly.

"What? Another wonder? What is this one?"

Margaret's eyes sparkled.

"Mrs. Amber is going to marry Dr. Godfrey."

"That is no news."

"Why, did you suspect?" cried Margaret.

"Certainly, and so might you, little stupid, if you had n't been thinking about somebody else."

"Paul!"

"It will be a very convenient arrange-

ment," continued Paul. "It will save the doctor some trouble, and, more than all, it gives you to me without delay, — not that I should have admitted the family claim, — for, O Margaret, you belong to my love. For all my playful words, my heart trembles with an overflow of solemn joy."

Her head nestled on his shoulder; and by and by she drew his face down, and softly whispered, —

"Dear Paul, I have no courage to say it, but I will be married in a month, if you wish."

In a month, Margaret fulfilled her promise. Mrs. Amber was in a little flutter of excitement, having quite a personal interest in the wedding, which was, however, very quiet.

Margaret was beautiful in her lustrous pearl silk, with the white arbutus flowers in her shining, bronze hair. It was a May-day full of beauty and fragrance, and the happy music of the birds; the tranquil sea smiled back into the sky, and the waves rippled over the rocks with a silvery tinkle, and the genial sunshine flooded the old house. And so the new life began.

## CHAPTER XII.

### RETRIBUTION.

It was nine o'clock at night, and Vale Amber crept out of the miserable lodging-house where he had lain concealed all day, and went stealthily into the streets. For weeks he had been a hunted creature, hiding himself in the most wretched places, and living with the vilest of people; subsisting on the coarsest food, or doing with none at all; in rags and filth, in dark, noisome cellars, in contact with drunkenness and disease, with ribald jests ringing in his ears, and the deformity of sin laid bare all around him, and always finding his surest shelter in the great city which shelters so many thousand outcasts. Now he looked in the little triangular fragment of a mirror, where a score or two of loathsome creatures saw the reflection of their own hideousness every day, and did not shudder at the sight, and said, with a bitter smile distorting his face, —

"I don't think even — well, no matter who, — it's sacrilege to think of her here, — but even she would n't know you now, old fellow."

Not know him indeed! The handsome face was haggard and sallow, his dark, magnetic eyes bloodshot and lustreless, and the glossy black curls had been cropped short; but far worse than all this was the tortured, despairing, glaring, helpless look; a soul driven back from the gates of heaven might look so. God pity the human creature who does.

So being disguised past recognition, — though the eye of a policeman is keener than that of a friend, — he meant to steal out of the city, and make his way to Canada. He staggered out into the glare of the gas-lights, he had drunk nothing all day, and little for many weeks, — the risk was too great for that, — but he was weak, and he had been crouching in corners, and sleeping upon hard floors, and his limbs had lost their suppleness and agility. So stealing along, keeping in the shade of the brick walls, his eyes strained to discover an enemy, timorous and watchful, and alive to all with a consciousness of guilt, and preyed upon by the keenest remorse, he caught sight of a face that he knew, and, being opposite the theatre, dodged in, and skulked in the passages leading from the vestibule, and when a crowd of men and boys less miserable and somewhat better clad than himself streamed in on their way to the pit, he fell in with the tide, paid his money, and took his place.

From pit to gallery the great house was thronged, for the new star, whose rising had been hailed with acclamations, was to appear again to-night. But Vale knew nothing of this, and he looked around with indifference, his senses being benumbed with what he had undergone, but gradually growing into a greater interest as the familiar sights and sounds recalled his former self, and assuming at last a transient likeness to that self.

Above him the boxes shone resplendently; a sea of bright eyes and snowy shoulders; of regal heads crowned with beautiful hair, where flowers shone and gems glittered; of sheeny silks and ethereal crapes, and folds of misty lace, and jewels gleaming upon neck and arms. Faces there, that Vale knew, smiled as they had once smiled upon him, but would never smile again, nor yet weep, knowing only his sins, and never thinking about or pitying his suffering. And there were men there who had drank and played with him, and borrowed money

from him, and eaten feasts at his cost, and Vale thought, bitterly, how they would curse him if he came in their way today. And through all his hatred, and all his bitterness, and agonizing shame, and hopeless remorse, the thought of the "might have been" penetrated like a knife.

At last the bell tinkled, and the curtain went up; a group of persons around the star only serving as foils to her marvelous beauty and grace. Scarcely more than a child, fair and delicate as a lily, her lovely hair lay in little, shining rings over the white forehead, and then fell in golden ripples adown her ivory neck. Such sweet, infantile grace, that people who smiled at first in pleasure felt their eyes suddenly blinded by tears. Vale stirred uneasily, and muttered, —

"It is Kitty Gray!"

She began to sing, and her voice fell clear and sweet upon the listening ears and waiting hearts of the vast audience. It was a pathetic, wailing melody, stealing out through a massive orchestral accompaniment, rising higher and higher, as the lark soars and sings, till it seemed to rain in silver drops of sound from heaven. Vale had heard that air from her lips before; out on the bay floating in his boat she had sung it, shyly looking up into his eyes for the praise that was sweeter to her than the music. Somehow, Vale had then felt himself infinitely above her, in the half-development of her girlhood; but now, as he listened, he knew she had gained a height he could never reach, and, with a sudden flash of intuition, he recognized the grandeur of the self-renunciation born of her love for him, through which her limited intellect had far out-soared him.

Perhaps Kitty remembered singing the song to him, for, as she sang, the tender, wistful blue eyes seemed looking beyond the sea of faces before her, and the sweet mouth quivered as if with pain. The curtain fell, and the audience burst into a storm of applause, while behind the scenes the singer stood white and motionless, and wholly forgetful of her great success.

Vale made his way out, with a strange choking in his throat. Walking out toward the suburbs, he came at last to a low, mean tenement. There was an oyster cellar in the basement, and the men inside were talking boisterously. Bending down a little, as he passed, Vale could see what he had come in

search of, and, going quietly on, when a few paces from the door he gave a low whistle, scarcely above his breath. The great black dog lying just within the door started up, and ran up the steps.

"Romeo!"

The creature sprang upon him.

"Faithful to the end, old fellow," he said.

He slipped into a back street, the dog following, and before day was many miles from the city. The little bundle in his hand gave him a change of garments, and at night he dared show himself openly. In the early morning, a day or two after, he found himself in the little seaport town of P—, that looked just as it did when he was a boy.

He walked about in the streets, adroitly seeking to escape the close observation of the passers-by. His care was needless. No one knew him. Old friends passed him carelessly, never once guessing that it was he. Was he so changed? But why not? It seemed to him that a century had passed since that night when he landed with Paul at the little stone pier. All his youth had gone from him. He had grown suddenly old, — old in sensation, and, oh! so old in crime and remorse! It would not do to visit the places which he most longed to see: he must wait till dark. So he sat all day in desolate places along the shore, his mind busily going over the past, and looking aimlessly toward the future. If it were not too late to begin anew, life might have something left for him. If he had not taken the last fatal step! But the law laid in wait for him, and his susceptible nature, open upon every side to delightful sensations, shrank appalled from the certainty of isolation and dungeon walls.

It was awful to be alone with himself. His sins had found him out. Remorse had seized him, and bitter repentance. The dead, irrevocable past confronted him, a hideous spectre that gibbered and mocked at his misery. No more excuse, no more deceitful palliations, no more sophistry, no more calling grave errors by light names. The sins that he had fancied venial assumed their true proportions, and seemed to lead naturally up to all that followed. He saw now that his whole life had been a preparation for the doom of the outcast that was upon him.

Sitting all alone by the shore, the sea

thundering around him, and these terrible, haunting thoughts in his mind, he took out the bracelet he had long ago given Kitty, — handled it mechanically, and looked back to those days of comparative innocence. He had ordered it made for Margaret, years before, using as the central device the little emerald-gold star that he had worn hung around his neck when Captain Amber found him at the Barbadoes, a handsome boy of seven or eight. But some trifle estranged him temporarily from Margaret, and he gave the bracelet to Kitty Gray, and begged a kiss in payment. He had looked at the design before a hundred times, in mere curiosity, — now, as he carelessly toyed with it, he thought that its price might some time come between him and starvation.

It had been sent to his hotel in New York, one day, just after Elsie had left him. How did Kitty know where he was, he wondered. She meant to show him, by restoring it, how utterly she renounced him. Well, that was no matter. Only that he deserved it! That was where it hurt. He clenched the toy in his hand, — a concealed spring flew out, and, looking in a surprise that drew his thoughts from himself for a moment, Vale saw, within the shallow, concave space, the name, "Valerio St. Ives."

"My father," he said instantly. Then for a long time memory and thought were busy. At last he said slowly, "So that handsome, brilliant woman was my mother. If I had known it then — but it's no matter. She shall never know it now. I wonder, though, if she would n't have hated her son for his rascally father's sake. But they say a mother's love is true. If I had had hers, it might have been different. I don't know. God knows."

He got up hastily. It was almost dark now, and the tide was setting steadily in, and a fresh wind was upon the water. He went down to one of the wharves, hired a sail-boat, and in an hour more was opposite the homely old town. The pleasant gloom of the August evening hung over it, and the scent of hayfields came to him off the shore; the whole was tranquil and homelike and sweet.

It was only himself that was wrong, and out of tune. He moored his boat, and quickly made his way by paths that he knew along the shore, and up across the fields to the arbor where he sat with Margaret that night.

"I am glad she did not listen to me," he muttered. "I have n't wrecked her happiness, God bless her!"

He stole softly through the garden, under the shrubberies, and presently concealed himself in the gloom of the lindens, close by the parlor window. The curtain was drawn up, and the cheerful lamplight streamed out into the dusky night. It was Elsie whom he saw first; and, as she moved, he started, and half uttered a cry.

His child! A rosy, dimpled creature, undressed for bed, all alive with beauty, — white, soft limbs, perfect hands, round, pulpy cheeks, his own eyes and hair, — his boy!

Vale breathed heavily. How delicious it would be to kiss those lips! Would it not be possible? No: that was madness. His eyes turned gladly from Elsie to the child. It was pain to look at her; but this child, this sweet, winsome creature, knew no harm of him; it would not shudder and grow pale at sight of him. If he were to clasp and kiss it, it would smile back into his eyes. It owed him no grudge, unless for the gift of life. He saw the mother's delight in the boy; saw her kiss the soles of the tiny, pink feet, listening to the soft crowing and cooing; watched all its pretty ways, smiled at the cunning, baby tricks, — the little, doubled fists, the mimic leaps; once he even laughed audibly.

A long time he watched them, charmed into forgetfulness of the misery of the present, till Elsie, always shy of the dark, came, and dropped the curtain, shutting him out of the heaven of that home. The action was symbolical.

Vale turned away drearily from the window, and went across the marshes. There were figures on the doorstep of the stone house, and he waited in the shadow of a cliff till they went in, and he heard the door clang. Presently a light sprang up, and after a little while he ventured nearer.

A little maid was bringing in the tea equipage, and Margaret took the things from the tray. Just as she always looked, he thought, even to the soft rose-tint of her cheeks. The round, white fingers moved daintily among the cups; he caught the love-light in her laughing eyes, as she looked at Paul from time to time. Just as she always looked, only in her face was that supreme contentment that tells of a life that asks nothing to make it perfect. And Paul's

happiness shone in his eyes, in his manlier bearing, in his voice, and all his ways.

"If I might only go in," Vale thought. It would be something to carry away such a *good-by* as they would give him. He was sure of a welcome, sure that a place would be made for him at the table. He so longed for a single word of comfort; and Margaret would speak that word. He crept around to the door, — his hand was upon the latch. But he waited. "The sight of me would only give her pain," he said. "No, I won't go in."

He went back to his post. It was almost the first act of self-renunciation in his whole life. And, now tea was over, Paul took a book to read, and as Margaret came around to his side with her sewing, she stooped for a kiss, and the husband's arm gently drew her closer. Vale turned away, an unspoken agony in his heart. He went back to his boat, and stepped into it, and put off, leaving all he cared for behind, henceforth a wanderer upon the earth.

Romeo crept up to him, and laid his cold nose in his hand, looking up wistfully. But Vale did not notice him. The boat swept out. Vale's mind was running busily down coming years; they all looked black and desolate. Past and future alike terrible; *no faith in God to tide him over* the present, no trust in him for what was to come. The water rippled around the prow, — the dark, alluring water, shining, smooth and swift, gleaming with phosphorescence, singing some strange, subtle music, charming by some weird spell, forever drawing his eye down unknown depths.

"Is not death better than this?" said Vale. "It is only a moment, and it is over." And still the Lurelei of the sea beckoned him. "If death were but the end!" The thought of the long, rolling, *endless years of eternity* made him shudder. It would be just the same after as before. "No escape," he muttered gloomily.

*No cure for this remorse*, — none except reformation. If that were possible. Perhaps. The minutes went on. He sat in the stern of the boat, and was crying like a child. At last he thought he would try, and one eager, trembling prayer sprang to his lips. Perhaps it was not too late, after all.

A strong breeze sprang up, and stiffened his sails. The boat danced over the water. and Vale roused himself. A cloud that had

been low in the west was now settling down in gloomy blackness upon the water. The thunder bellowed ominously. He had not noticed the tempest that had been gathering its desolating forces. "If I could reach shore," he thought.

All this time he had been tacking about in the harbor, loth to leave it; now it was the light from the window of the room where Paul and Margaret were sitting that must serve as his beacon. He set his course for the little stone pier. In a moment the tempest burst; overhead the thunder seemed to cleave the sky, and the white splendor of lightning shone far over the foaming waves.

The wind came, desolating everything before it. Stout sailors in stanch ships lying close in-shore peered out into the darkness, — a darkness that was almost palpable except when the water was lit by the ghastly gleam of the lightning, — and said to each other that it was a terrible tempest.

"You mind that little cockle-shell of a boat that went up a while ago," said the captain of one of these vessels. "It's lucky if she got in, for she could never have lived through this." And the close-set sails and the cordage above his head wrenched and groaned under the terrible strain.

Such tempests leave no sign. Nature forgets her wrongs so easily. The next day was sweet and sunny; a soft haze lay on the green hills behind the town, there was a twinkle as of jewels on the grass; the sky was blue and lucent; so, too, was the sea, — though it rolled in long, angry swells, and the voice of its passion was not hushed. Margaret and Paul sat down to breakfast. It was quite natural that the world should smile and be gay for them.

By and by October came in, with startling details of the ruin wrought by the tempest. The church steeple had been thrown down, the tall liberty pole shivered from tip to base, and the beach was covered with the shattered timbers of small boats that had been broken from their moorings, and hurled on shore.

While he was speaking, something darkened the outside door; a dog, cowed, depressed, his head hanging down, smelling about the floor, and so up to Paul's feet.

"My God! It is Romeo!"

Paul sprang up, and rushed from the house. The whole household followed.

There he lay upon the sands, white and

still, the old boyish beauty in the dead face — on the sands that his own springing foot had pressed many and many a time, just within calling of those who loved him; the summer sun shone upon him, the summer wind stirred his hair, the whole world around him was palpitating with life. But Vale was dead. Never to know how Mar-

garet's tears rained upon his face, how her kisses fell; never to know the world of love and pity in her heart; careless of the tender forgiveness of the wronged wife, unmoved by the mingled shame and anguish of his mother, now twice bereft, — all alike vain before his solemn silence and stony repose. Alone now with the inexorable Past.

## A MARBLE WOMAN.

BY 'A. M. BARNARD, AUTHOR OF "V. V., OR PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS."

[No. 1. — COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

### CHAPTER I.

#### LITTLE CECIL.

"What do you mean by pulling the bell fit to bring the house down?" demanded gruff old Anthony, as he flung the door open and found himself confronted with a large trunk and a small girl holding a letter in her hand.

"It was the coachman, please, sir," was the composed answer.

"Well, what do you want, child?"

"I wish to come in. This is my luggage; I'll help you with it."

The small personage laid hold of one handle with such perfect good faith in her own strength, that it produced a chuckle from the old servant as he drew the trunk in with one hand, the child with the other, and shut the door, saying more respectfully, —

"Now, ma'am, what next?"

Smoothing her disordered dress with dignity, the little girl replied, as if repeating a carefully learnt lesson, —

"You are to give this letter to Mr. Basil Yorke, and say Miss Stein has come. Then I am to wait till he tells me what to do."

"Are you Miss Stein?" asked Anthony, bewildered by the appearance of a child in that lonely house.

"Yes, sir; and I've come to live here if Mr. Yorke will keep me," said the little girl, glancing wistfully about her as if waiting for her welcome.

"Are you a relation of master's?" questioned Anthony, still more mystified.

"No, sir. He knew my papa and mamma, but he never saw me. That's all I know about it."

The old man shook his head with an air of resignation as he muttered to himself, —

"Some whim of master's; it's just like him." Then aloud, "I'll take up the letter, but you'd better play out here till you

're wanted; for when master gets busy up aloft, it's no use trying to fetch him down before the time."

Leading her through the hall, he opened a glass door and ushered her into a city garden where a few pale shrubs and vines rustled in the wind. The child glanced listlessly about her as she walked, for nothing was in bloom, and the place had a neglected air. Suddenly a splendid, full-blown rose softly brushed her cheek, and fell at her feet. With an exclamation of pleasure she caught it up, and looked skyward to see what friendly fairy had divined her wish and granted it.

"Here I am," called a laughing voice. Turning about, she saw a boy leaning on the low wall that divided Mr. Yorke's garden from an adjoining one. A rosy, bright-eyed boy about her own age he seemed, full of the pleasant audacity which makes boyhood so charming, and in a neighborly mood just then; for as she looked up wondering, he nodded, smiled, and said merrily, —

"How are you? Do you like the rose?"

"Oh, yes! Did you mean it for me?"

"I thought you looked as if you needed one, so I tossed it over. It's very dismal down there. Suppose you come up here, and then you can see my garden while we talk a bit. Don't be afraid of me; just give me your hand, and there you are."

There was something so winning in voice, face and gesture, that little Miss Stein could not resist the invitation. She gave her hand, and soon sat on the wide coping of the wall, regarding her new friend with a shy yet confiding look as he did the honors of the place with high-bred eagerness. Neither asked the other's name, but making the rose their master of ceremonies, introduced themselves through that pretty medium, and soon forgot that they had been entire strangers five minutes before.

"Do you like my garden?" asked the boy,

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as the girl smelt her flower and smiled down on the blooming plot before her.

"Very much; I wish Mr. Yorke would have one like it."

"He don't care for such things; he's odd and busy, and a genius, you know."

"I hope that's nothing bad, because I'm going to live with him. Tell me all about him, for I never saw him in my life."

"He's a sculptor, and makes splendid statues up in that tower where nothing but the sun and sparrows can see him. He never shows them, and no one would ever see them if they did n't beg and tease and give him no peace till they do."

"Is he kind and pleasant?" asked the girl.

"He looks precious grim with his long hair and beard, but he's got kind eyes, though his face is dark and strange."

"Has he got a wife and any little children?"

"O dear, no! He lives here with old Tony and Mrs. Hester the maid. I heard my mother tell a lady that Mr. Yorke had had a love trouble, and can't bear women, so none dare go near him. He's got a splendid great dog, but he's as fierce as a wolf to every one but his master and Tony."

"I wish I had n't come. I don't like odd people, and I'm afraid of dogs," sighed Miss Stein.

"Mr. Yorke will be kind to such a little thing as you, and make old Judas like you, I dare say. Perhaps you won't have to stay long if you don't like it. Is your home far away?"

"I've got no home now. O mamma! mamma!" And covering her face with her little black frock, the child broke into such sudden, bitter sobs that the boy was stricken with remorse. Finding words vain, he sprang impetuously off the wall, and filling his hands with his choicest flowers, heaped them into the child's lap with such demonstrations of penitence and good will, that she could not refuse to be comforted. Just then Anthony called her, and with a hasty good-by she turned to obey, but the boy detained her for a moment to say, —

"Don't forget to ask Mr. Yorke if you may play with me, because you'll be very dull all by yourself, and I should like you for my little sweetheart."

"Alfred! Alfred! it is rather too soon for that," called a smiling lady from a window of the adjoining house, whereat the boy

sprang down, laughing at the unexpected publicity of his declaration, and Miss Stein walked away, looking much disturbed by Anthony's chuckles.

"The master will be down to his tea directly, so you can look out a winder and not meddle till he comes," said the old man as he left her.

The memory of the pretty lad warmed the child's heart and seemed to shed a ray of cheerfulness over the sombre room. A table was spread with care, and beside one plate lay a book, as if "the master" was in the habit of enlivening his solitary meals with such society as the full shelves about afforded him. The furniture was ancient. The window-hangings dark, the pictures weird and gloomy, and the deep silence that reigned through the house oppressed the lonely child. Approaching the table she ventured to examine the book. It proved intelligible and picturesque; so establishing herself in the arm-chair, she spread the volume before her, and soon became happily forgetful of orphanage and solitude.

So intent was she that a man came to the door unobserved, and pausing there, scrutinized her from head to foot. Had she looked up she would have seen a tall, athletic figure, and a singularly attractive face, though it was neither beautiful nor gentle. The dark, neglected hair was streaked with gray at thirty; the forehead was marked with deep lines, and under the black brows were magnificent yet melancholy eyes, that just then looked as if some strong emotion had kindled an unwonted fire in their depths. The lower part of the face gave flat contradiction to the upper, for the nose was disdainful, the chin square and grim, the whole contour of the mouth relentless, in spite of the softening effect of a becoming beard. Dressed in velvet cap and paletot, and framed in the dark doorway, he looked like a striking picture of some austere scholar aged with care or study, not with years; yet searching closer, one would have seen traces of deep suffering, latent passion, and a strange wistfulness, as if the lonely eyes were forever seeking something they had lost.

For many minutes Basil Yorke watched the unconscious child, as if there was some strong attraction for him in the studious little figure poring over the book with serious eyes, one hand turning the pictured pages, the other pushing back the wavy

hair from a blooming cheek and a forehead possessing delicate brows and the harmonious lines about the temples which artists so love. The man's eyes softened as he looked, for the child's patient trust made her friendlessness the more pathetic. He put out his hand as if to draw her to him, then checked the impulse, and the hard mouth grew grimmer as he swept off the cap, saying coldly, —

"Miss Stein, I am ready now."

His guest started, shut the book, slipped down and went to meet her host, offering her hand as if anxious to atone for the offence of meddling.

Like one unused to such acts, Mr. Yorke took the small hand, gave it a scarcely perceptible pressure, and dropped it without a word. The action grieved the child, yet nothing betrayed the pang of disappointment it gave her except a slight tremor in the voice that timidly asked, —

"Did you get the letter, sir?"

"I did. Your mother wishes me to keep you till you are eighteen, when you are to choose a guardian for yourself. Her family will not receive you, and your father's *family is far away*; but your mother and myself were old friends many years ago, and she hoped I would take you for a time."

"Will you, sir? I'll try not to be a trouble."

"No, I cannot. This is no place for a child; nor am I a fit guardian if it was. I will find some better home for you tomorrow. But as you will remain here tonight, you may take off your hat and cloak, or whatever it is."

Half pityingly, half impatiently, he spoke, and eyed the child as if he longed yet dared not keep her. The little hat was taken off, but the ribbons of the mantle were in a knot, and after pulling at it for a moment, she turned to her companion for help. As he stooped to give it with a curious reluctance in his manner, she scanned the face so near her own with innocent freedom, and presently murmured, as if to herself, —

"Yes, the boy was right; his eyes are kind."

With a wrench that tore the silk, and caused the child to start, Mr. Yorke broke the knot, and, turning away, rang the bell with vehemence.

"What is your name?" he asked, carefully averting his eyes as the little girl sat down.

"Cecelia Basil Stein."

"What an ominous conjunction!"

She did not understand the scornful exclamation, and proceeded to explain.

"Mamma's name was Cecelia, yours is Basil, and papa's was Stein. You can call me Celia, as mamma did, if you please, sir."

"No, I shall call you Cecil. I dislike the other name."

Quick tears sprang to the child's eyes, but none fell, and lowering her voice she said, with trembling lips, —

"Mamma wished me to tell you that she sent her love, and the one precious thing she had as a keepsake, and hoped you'd take it in memory of the happy days when you and she were friends."

Mr. Yorke turned his back upon her for several minutes, then asked abruptly, —

"Where have you been this last year?"

"Here in America. We were in England before that, because mamma did not like Germany since papa died, and we were tired of going about."

"Your father died when you were a baby, I think. Have you been with your mother ever since?" asked Mr. Yorke with a half smile, as the little creature spoke of these countries as composedly as if they were neighboring towns.

"Yes, I was always with her, and we were very happy staying in all sorts of new and pleasant places. But mamma wished to save up some money for me, so we came here and lived very plainly in the country till she" —

The child stopped there, for her lips trembled and she did not wish to disgrace herself by crying twice in an hour. He saw that she controlled herself, and the little trait of character pleased him, as did the pretty mixture of innocent frankness and good breeding betrayed by her manner and appearance.

"When did she leave you?" he ventured to ask, carefully avoiding the hard word "die."

"Three weeks ago."

"How old are you, Cecil?" he said presently, in order to change the current of her thoughts, although the question was an unnecessary one.

"Nearly twelve, sir."

"Twelve years, twelve long years since I saw her last, and then gave up the world."

He spoke low to himself, and his thoughts seemed to wander from the present to the

past, as, bending his head upon his breast, he stood mute and motionless till Anthony announced, —

"Tea is ready, master."

Looking up with the melancholy shadow gloomier than ever in his eyes, Yorke led the child to the table, filled her cup, put everything within her reach, and opening a book, read more than he ate. Twilight was deepening in the room; the oppressive silence made the meal unsocial, and Cecil's heart was heavy, for she felt doubly forlorn, bereft of the protection she had hoped to find and the familiar name her mother's voice had endeared to her. She ate a few morsels, then leaned back in her chair, looking drearily about and wondering what would happen next. She did not wait long before a somewhat startling incident occurred.

As her eye roved to and fro it was arrested by the sudden appearance of a face at one of the windows. A strange, uncanny face, half concealed by a black beard that made the pallor of the upper part more striking. It was gone again instantly, but Cecil had only time to catch her breath and experience a thrill of alarm, when the long curtains that hung before the half-open window stirred as if a hand grasped them, and through the narrow aperture between the folds the glitter of an eye was plainly visible. Fascinated by fear, the child sat motionless, longing to cry out, yet restrained by timidity and the hope that her companion would look up and see the intruder for himself.

He seemed absorbed in his book, and utterly unconscious of the hidden watcher, till an involuntary gesture caused another movement of the curtains, as if the hand loosened its grasp, for the eye vanished, and Cecil covered her face with a long sigh of relief. Mr. Yorke glanced up, mistook the gesture for one of weariness, and evidently glad of an excuse to dispose of the child, he said abruptly, —

"You have come a long way today, and must be tired. Will you go to bed?"

"Oh, yes, I shall be glad to go," cried Cecil, eager to leave what to her was now a haunted room.

Taking a lamp, he led her along dimly lighted halls, up wide staircases, into a chamber that seemed immense to its small occupant, while the darkly curtained bed was so like a hearse she instantly decided

that it would be impossible to sleep in it. Mr. Yorke glanced about him as if desirous of making her comfortable, but quite ignorant how to set about it.

"The old woman who would have attended you is sick; but if you want anything, ring for Anthony. Good-night."

Cecil was on the point of lifting her face for the good-night kiss she had been accustomed to receive from other lips; but remembering the careless pressure of his hand, the cold welcome he had given her, she restrained the impulse, and let him leave her with no answer but a quiet echo of his own "Good-night."

The moment his steps died away, she opened the door again and watched his light mount higher and higher as he wound his way up a spiral flight of stairs that evidently led to the tower. Cecil longed to follow, for she was sleepless with the excitement of novelty and a lingering touch of fear (for the face still haunted her), and she now reproached herself for not having spoken to Mr. Yorke. She was about to make this an excuse for following him, when the sound of noises from above made her hesitate.

"I'll wait till he comes down, or till the person goes, for he ought to know about the man I saw, because it might be a thief," she thought.

After lingering on the threshold till she was tired, Cecil seated herself in an easy-chair beside the door, and amused herself by examining the pictures on the wall. But she was more weary than she knew; the chair was luxuriously cushioned, the steady murmur of voices very soothing, and she soon lapsed away into a drowse.

The certainty that some one had touched her, suddenly startled her wide awake. An instant's thought recalled her purpose, and fearing to be too late, she ran into the upper hall, hoping to find Mr. Yorke descending. No one was in sight, however, yet so sure was she that a hand had touched her and a footstep sounded in the room, that she looked over the balustrade, intending to call. Not a word left her lips, however, for neither Mr. Yorke nor Anthony appeared; but a man was going slowly down, wrapped in a cloak, with a shadowy hat drawn low over his brows. A slender hand shone white against the dark cloak, and as he reached the hall below he glanced over his shoulder, showing Cecil the same colorless face with

its black beard and glittering eyes that had frightened her before, though he evidently did not see her now.

It alarmed her again, for it was a singularly sinister face in spite of its beauty. Never pausing to see what became of him, and conscious of nothing but an uncontrollable longing to be near Mr. Yorke, Cecil climbed the winding stairs without a pause till she reached an arched doorway, and seemed to see a gathering of ghosts beyond. The long, large room was filled with busts, statues, uncut blocks, tools, dust and disorder, in the midst of which stood Mr. Yorke, dressed in a suit of gray linen, and intent on modeling something from a hand-ful of clay. Many children would have been more alarmed at these inanimate figures than at the other, but Cecil found so much that was inviting, she forgot fear in delight, and boldly entered. A smiling woman seemed to beckon to her, a winged child to offer flowers, and all about the room pale gods and goddesses looked down upon her from their pedestals with what to her beauty-loving eye seemed varying expressions of welcome. Judas, the great dog, lay like a black statue on a tawny tiger-skin, and the strong glow from a chandelier shone on his master as he worked with a swift dexterity that charmed Cecil. Eager to ask questions, she began her explanations with a sudden, —

"Bazil, I came up to" — but got no further, for with a start that sent the model crumbling to the floor, he turned upon her almost angrily, demanding, —

"Who calls me by that name?"

"It 's me; mamma always said Bazil, and so I got used to it. What can I call you, sir?"

"Simply Yorke, as others do. I forbid that hateful name. Why are you here?"

"Indeed, I could not help it. I was so lonely and so frightened down there. I saw a face at the window, and wanted to tell you, but heard some one talking up here and I waited. But when I waked I saw the same face going down the stairs, and so I ran to you."

Yorke listened with curious intentness to her story, asked a question or two, mused a moment, then said, pointing to a half-finished athlete, —

"The man is my model for that. He is a strange person, and does odd things, but you need not fear him."

A quick-witted woman would have seen at a glance that dust lay thick on the clay figure, and have known that the slender hand grasping the cloak could never have belonged to the arm that served as a model for the brawny athlete. But Cecil's childish eyes saw no discrepancy between the two, and she believed the explanation at once. With a sigh of mingled satisfaction and relief, she looked about her, and said beseechingly, —

"Please let me stop and see you work. I like it so much, so very much!"

"What do you know about it, child?" Yorke answered, wondering at her interest and sudden animation.

"Why, I used to do it; mamma taught me as you taught her, with wax first, then pretty brown clay like this; and I was very happy doing it, because I liked it best of all my plays."

"Your mother taught you! Why, Cecil?" And Yorke's grave face kindled with an expression that won the child to franker speech at once.

"She liked it as well as I, and always called me little Bazil when I made pretty things. She was fond of it because she used to be very happy doing it a long time ago. She often told me about you when you lived in her father's house; how you hated lessons, and loved to make splendid things in wax and wood and clay; how you did n't care to eat or sleep when you were busy; and how you made an image of her, but broke it when she was unkind to you. She did n't tell me what she did, but I wish you would, so that I may be careful not to do it while I'm here."

He laughed such a bitter laugh, it both touched and troubled her, as he answered harshly, —

"No fear of that; I never can be hurt again as she hurt me thirteen years ago." Then with a sudden change in countenance and manner, he sat down on a block of marble with a half-finished angel's head looking out of it, drew Cecil toward him, and looked at her with hungry eyes, as he said eagerly, —

"Tell me more. Did she talk of me? Did she teach you to care for me? Child, speak fast, — I vowed I would ask no questions, but I must!"

His voice rose, his glance searched her face, his stern mouth grew tremulous, and the whole man seemed to wake and glow

with an unconquerable desire. Re-assured by this sudden thaw in the frosty aspect of her guardian, Cecil leaned confidently against his knee and softly answered, with her hand upon his shoulder, —

"Yes, mamma often spoke of you; she wished me to love you dearly, — and the last thing she said was that about the keepsake. I think she will be sorry if you send me away, because she thought you'd care for me as you once did for her."

Some strong emotion rushed warm and tender over Basil Yorke, and as if the words, the gentle touch, had broken down some barrier set up by pride or will, he took the child into his arms with an impetuous gesture, saying brokenly, —

"She remembered me, — she sent me her all. Surely I may keep the gift and put one drop of sweetness into this bitter life of mine."

Bewildered, yet glad, Cecil clung to him, drawn by an attraction that she could not understand. For a moment Yorke hid his face in her long hair, then put her away as abruptly as he had embraced her, and returned to his work as if unused to such betrayals of feeling, and ashamed of them. He merely said, as he took up his tools, —

"Amuse yourself as you please; I must work."

Quite contented, Cecil roved about the room till curiosity was satisfied; made timid advances toward the great dog, which were graciously received, and at length gathering up the crumbled clay that fell from Yorke's hand, she sat down beside Judas and began to mould as busily as the master.

Presently a little voice broke the silence, humming a song that Yorke remembered well. Softly as it was sung, Judas pricked up his ears, his master paused in his work, and, leaning with folded arms, listened till the long hush recalled the finger from her happy revelry. She stopped instantly, but seeing no displeasure in the altered face above her, she held out her work, asking shyly, —

"Is it very bad, sir?"

It was a bunch of grapes deftly fashioned by small fingers that needed no other tool than their own skill, and though swiftly done, it was as graceful as if the gray cluster had just been broken from a vine. Yorke examined it critically, lifted the child's face and studied it intently for a moment, kissed it gravely on the forehead

so like his own, and said, with an air of decision, —

"It is well done; I shall keep both it and you. Will you stay and work with me, Cecil, and be content with no friend but myself, no playmate but old Judas?"

Cecil read the yearning of the man's heart in his eyes with the quick instinct of a child, and answered it by exclaiming heartily, —

"Yes, I will; and be very happy here, for I like this place, I like Judas, and I love you already, because you make these lovely things, and are so kind to me now."

"Are you a discreet girl, Cecil? Can you see and hear things, and yet not ask questions nor tell tales?" asked Yorke, somewhat anxiously.

"I think I am."

"So do I. Now I have a mind to keep you, for you are one of my sort; but I wish you to understand that nothing which goes on in my house is to be talked about outside of it. I let the world alone, and desire the world to do the same by me; to remember if you forget your promise, you march at once."

"I always keep my promises. But may I ask two questions now before I promise? then I'll never do it any more?"

"Well, my inquisitive little person, what is it?"

"I want to know if I can sometimes see the pleasant boy who gave me this rose?"

"And kissed you on the wall," added Yorke, with such a satirical look that Cecil colored high and involuntarily exclaimed, —

"Did you see us? I thought you could n't from this high place."

"I see everything that happens on my premises. If you do not gossip you may see the boy occasionally. What is the other question?"

"Will that disagreeable man come here often, — the model, I mean? He frightens me, and I don't want to see him unless you wish me to."

"You will not see him any more. I shall not work at this figure for the present, so there will be no need of him. Make yourself easy; I shall never wish you to see or speak to him."

"You are very kind. I'll try to please you and not peep or ask questions. Can I wash my hands and look at this pretty book? I'll go quietly away to bed when I get sleepy."

With very much the air of a man who had undertaken the care of a butterfly, Yorke established her with the coveted portfolio on her lap, and soon entirely forgot her. Accustomed to the deep reveries of a solitary life, hour after hour passed unheeded, and the city clocks tolled their warnings to deaf ears. After glancing once at the little chair and finding the child gone, he thought no more of her, till rising to rest his cramped limbs he saw her lying fast asleep on the tiger-skin. One arm embraced *the dog's shaggy neck*, her long hair swept the dusty floor, and the rosy warmth of slumber made the childish face blooming and beautiful.

"Truly I am a fit guardian for a little creature like this," Yorke muttered, as he watched her a moment; then he covered her with a cloak, and began to pace the room, busied with some absorbing thought. Once he paused and looked down at the sleeper with an expression of grim determination, saying to himself as he eyed the group,—

"If I had power to kill the savage beast, skill to subdue the fierce dog, surely I can mould the child as I will, and make the daughter pay the mother's debt."

His face darkened as he spoke, the ruthless look deepened, and the sudden clenching of the hand boded ill for the young life he had taken into his keeping.

All night the child lay dreaming of her mother, all night the man sat pondering over an early wrong that had embittered a once noble nature, and dawn found them unchanged, except that Cecil had ceased to smile in her sleep, and Basil Yorke had shaped a fugitive emotion into a relentless purpose.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE BROKEN CUPID.

Five years later, a new statue stood in the studio; we might have said two new statues, though one was a living creature. The marble figure was a lovely, Psyche-bending form, and with her graceful hand above her eyes, as if she watched her sleeping lover. Of all Basil Yorke's works this was the best, and he knew it, for, surrounded by new influences, he had wrought at it with much of his youthful ardor,—had found much of the old happiness while so

busied, and was so proud of his success, that no offer could tempt him to part with it,—no certainty of fame persuade him to exhibit it, except to a chosen few.

The human figure was Cecil, changed from a rosy child into a slender, deep-eyed girl. Colorless, like a plant deprived of sunshine, strangely unyouthful in the quiet grace of her motions, the sweet seriousness of her expression, but as beautiful as the Psyche and almost as cold. Her dress heightened the resemblance, for the white folds draped her from neck to ankle; not an ornament marred *its severe simplicity*, and the wavy masses of her dark hair were gathered up with a fillet, giving her the head of a young Hebe. It was a fancy of Yorke's, and as but few eyes but his beheld her, she dressed for him alone, unconscious that she served as a model for his fairest work. Standing in the one ray of sunshine that shot athwart the subdued light of the studio, she seemed intent upon a little Cupid exquisitely carved in the purest marble. She was not working now, for the design was finished, but seemed to be regarding it with mingled satisfaction and regret,—satisfaction that it was done so well, regret that it was done so soon. The little god was just drawing an arrow from his quiver with an arch smile, and the girl watched him with one almost as gay. A rare sight upon her lips, but some happy faucy seemed to bring it, and more than once she gave the graceful figure a caressing touch, as if she had learned to love it.

"Don't fire again, little Cupid, I surrender," suddenly exclaimed a blithe voice behind her, and, turning, Cecil saw her friend and neighbor, Alfred, now a tall young man, though much of the boyish frankness and impetuosity still remained.

"Do you like it, Alf?" she asked with a quiet smile of welcome, and a repose of manner contrasting strongly with the eagerness of the new-comer's.

"You know I do, Cecil, for it has been my delight ever since you began it. The little god is perfect, and I must have him at any cost. Name your price, and let it be a high one."

"Yorke would not like that, neither should I. You have more than paid for it by friendly acts and words through these five years, so let me give it to you with all my heart."

She spoke tranquilly, and offered her

hand as if transferring to him the lovely figure it had wrought. He took the white hand in both his own, and with a sudden glow on his cheek, a sudden ardor in his eye, said, in an impulsive voice, —

"With all your heart, Cecil? Let me take you at your word, let me claim, not only the image of love but the reality, and keep this hand as mine?"

A soft tinge of color touched the girl's cheek as she drew her hand away, but the quiet smile remained unchanged, and she still looked up at him with eyes as innocent and frank as any child's.

"I did not mean that, Alf; we are too young for such things yet, and I know nothing of love except in marble."

"Let me teach you then; we never are too young to learn that lesson," he urged eagerly. "I meant to wait another year before I spoke, for then I shall be my own master, and have a home to give you. But you grow so lovely and so dear, I must speak out and know my fate. Dear Cecil, what is it to be?"

"I cannot tell; this is so new and strange to me, I have no answer ready."

She looked troubled now, but more by his earnestness than by any maidenly doubts or fears of her own, and leaning her head upon her hand seemed to search for an answer, and search in vain. Alfred watched her a moment, then broke out indignantly, —

"No wonder it seems new and strange, for you have led a nun's life all these years, and know nothing of the world outside these walls. Yorke lets you read neither romances nor poetry, gives you no companions but marble men and women, no change but a twilight walk each day, or a new design to work out in this gloomy place. You never have been told you have a heart and a right to love like other women. Let me help you to know it, and find an answer for myself."

"Am I so different from other girls? Is my life strange and solitary? I've sometimes thought so, but I never felt quite sure. What is love, Alfred?"

"This!"

And opening his arms her young lover would have answered her wistful question eloquently, but Cecil shrunk a little, and put up her hand to check his impulse.

"Not so: tell me in words, Alf, how one feels when one truly loves."

"I only know how I feel, Cecil. I long

for you day and night; think of you wherever I am; see no one half so beautiful, half so good as you; care for nothing but being here, and have no wish to live unless you will make life happy for me."

"And that is love?" She spoke low, to herself, for as he answered her face had slowly been averted, a soft trouble had dawned in her eyes, and a deeper color risen to her cheek, as if the quiet heart was waking suddenly.

"Yes; and you do love me, Cecil? Now I know it, — now you will not deny it."

She looked up, pale but steady, for the child's expression was quite gone, and in her countenance was all a woman's pain and pity, as she said decidedly, —

"No, Alf, I do not love you. I know myself now, and feel that it is impossible."

But Alfred would not accept the hard word "impossible," and pleaded passionately, in spite of the quiet determination to end the matter, which made Cecil listen almost as coldly as if she did not hear. Anger succeeded surprise and hope, as the young man bitterly exclaimed, —

"You might make it possible, but you will not try!"

"No, I will not, and it is unkind of you to urge me. Let me be in peace, — I'm happy with my work, and my nun's life was pleasant till you came to trouble it with foolish things."

She spoke impatiently, and the first glimpse of passion ever seen upon her face now disturbed its quietude, yet made it lovelier than ever.

"Well said, Cecil; my pupil does honor to her master."

Both started as the deep voice sounded behind them, and both turned to see Basil Yorke leaning in the doorway with a satirical smile on his lips. Cecil made an involuntary motion to go to him, but checked herself as Alfred said hotly, —

"It is not well said! and but for the artificial training you have given her, she would be glad to change this unnatural life, though she dare not say so, for you are a tyrant, in spite of your seeming kindness!"

"Do you fear me too much to tell the truth, Cecil?" asked Yorke, quite unmoved.

"No, master."

"Then decide between us two, now and forever, because I will not have your life nor mine disturbed by such scenes as this. If you love Alfred, say so freely, and when

my guardianship ends I will give you to his. If you prefer to stop with me happy in the work you are wonderfully fitted to perform, content with the quiet life I deem best for you, and willing to be the friend and fellow-laborer of the old master, then come to him and let us hear no more of lovers or of tyrants."

As he spoke Cecil had listened breathlessly, and when he paused, she went to him with such a glad and grateful face, such instant and entire willingness, that it touched him deeply, though he showed no sign of it except to draw her nearer, with a caressing gesture which he had not used since she ceased to be a child. The words, the act, wounded the young lover to the heart, and he broke out, in a voice trembling with anger, sorrow and reproach, —

"I might have known how it would be; I should have known if my own love had not blinded me. You have taught her something beside your art. — have made too sure of her to fear any rival; and when the time comes you will change the guardian to a husband, and become her master in earnest."

"Not I! my day for such folly is long since past. Cecil will never be anything to me but my ward and pupil, unless some more successful lover than yourself should take her from me."

Yorke laughed scornfully at the young man's accusation, but looked down at the girl with an involuntary pressure of the arm that held her, for despite his careless manner, she was dearer to him than he knew.

"I will never leave you for any other, — never, my dear master."

Alfred heard her soft whisper, saw her cling to Yorke, knew that there was no hope for him, and with a broken, "Good-by, Cecil, I shall not trouble you again," he was gone.

"Poor lad, he takes it hardly, but he'll soon forget. I should have warned him, had I not been sure it would have hastened what I desired to prevent. It is over at last, thank Heaven! so look up, foolish child; there are no lovers here to frighten you now."

But Cecil did not look up, she hid her face and wept quietly, for Alfred had been her only young friend since the day he gave the rose and made the new home pleasant by his welcome. Yorke let her tears flow

unreproved for a few moments, then his patience seemed exhausted, and placing her in a seat, he turned away to examine the Cupid which Alfred had not accepted. As he looked at it he smiled, then frowned, as if some unwelcome fancy had been conjured up by it, and asked abruptly, —

"What suggested the idea of this, Cecil?"

"You did!" was the half-audible answer.

"I did? never to my knowledge."

"Your making Psyche suggested Cupid, for though you did not tell me the pretty fable Alf did, and told me how my image should be made. I could not do a large one, so I pleased myself with trying a little winged child with the bandage and the bow."

"Why would you not let me see it till it was done?"

"At first because I hoped to make it good enough to give you, then I thought it too full of faults to offer, so I gave it to Alf; but he would not have it without me, and now I don't care for it any more."

Yorke smiled, as if well pleased at this proof of her indifference to the youth, then with a keen glance at the drooping face before him, he asked, —

"Are you quite sure that you do not care for Alfred?"

"Very sure, master."

"Then what has changed you so within a week or two? You sung yesterday like an uncaged bird, a thing you seldom do. You smile to yourself as you work, and when I wished to use your face as a model not an hour ago, you could not fix your eyes on me as I bade you, and cried when I chid you. What is it, Cecil? If you have anything upon your mind tell me, and let nothing disturb us again if possible."

If the girl had been trained to repress all natural emotions and preserve an unvarying calmness of face, voice and manner, she had also been taught to tell the truth, promptly and fearlessly. Now it was evident that she longed to escape the keen eye and searching questions of her master, as she loved to call him, but she dared not hesitate, and answered slowly, —

"I should have told you something before, only I did not like to, and I thought perhaps you knew it."

"Well, well, stop blushing and speak out; I know nothing but this boy's love and the change in you." Yorke spoke impatiently, and wore an anxious look, as if



he dreaded more tender confessions, for Cecil never lifted her eyes as she rapidly went on,—

"A week ago, as we came in from our evening walk, you stopped at the corner to call Judas, and I went on to open the door for you. Just as I put the key into the latch, a hand took mine, as if to slip something into it, but I was so startled I let the paper drop, and should have called to you if some one had not wrapt me in a cloak so closely that I could not speak, though I was kissed more than once, and called 'my darling' in a very tender voice. It all happened in a minute, and before I knew what to do, the man was gone, and I ran in, too frightened to wait for you."

As she paused, Cecil looked up, and was amazed to see no wonder on Yorke's face, but an expression of pain and indignation that she could not understand. "Back again and I not know it," he muttered, to himself, then aloud, almost sternly,—

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"You were busy that night, and when I'd thought of it a little I did not like to speak of it, because I remembered that you called me silly when I told you that people made me uncomfortable by looking at me as I walked in the day. I thought I'd wait, but it troubled me and made me seem unlike myself, I suppose."

"Are you sure it was not Alfred, playing some foolish prank in the twilight?" asked Yorke.

"I know it was not Alf; he wears no beard, and is not tall like this strange man."

"It could not have been Anthony?"

"Oh, no! that is impossible. Old Tony's hands are rough, these were soft though very strong, and the voice was too low and kind for his."

"Have you no suspicion who it might have been?" asked Yorke, searching her thoughtful face intently.

She blushed deeper than before, but answered steadily,—

"I did not think of you, master, for you are tall and strong, you wear a beard and cloak, and your hand is soft. But your voice never is like that voice, and you never say 'my darling' in that tender way."

Yorke knit his brows, saying, a little bitterly,—

"You seem to have forgiven this insolent stranger already because of that, and to reproach me that I never use such senti-

mental phrases, nor embrace my ward upon my doorsteps. Shall I tell you who this interesting phantom probably was? The model, whom you disliked so much that I dismissed him when you came."

Cecil turned pale, for her childish terror had remained as fresh in her memory as the events that awakened it; and though she had merely caught glimpses of the man as he occasionally glided into Yorke's private room during the past five years, she still felt a curious mixture of interest and fear, and often longed to break her promise and ask questions concerning him and his peculiar ways.

"Why do you let him come?" she said, forgetting everything but surprise, as Yorke spoke as he had never done before.

"I wish I could prevent it!" he answered, eying her half sadly, half jealously. "I've bade him go, but he will come back to harass me. Now I'll end it at any cost."

"But why does he care for me?" asked Cecil, finding that her first question had received an answer.

"Because you are beautiful and"—there Yorke caught back the coming words, and after a pause said coldly, "Remember your promise,—no more of this."

For several minutes he went to and fro, busied with anxious thoughts, while Cecil mused over the mystery, and grieved for Alfred's disappointment. Suddenly Yorke paused before her.

"Do you understand to what you pledge yourself when you say you will never leave me, Cecil?"

"I think I do," was the ready answer.

"Nothing is to be changed, you know."

"I hope not."

"No romances,—no poetry to be allowed."

"I do not want them."

"No frivolities and follies like other women."

"I can be happy without."

"No more Cupids of any sort."

"Shall I break this one?"

"No, leave it as a warning, or send it to poor Alf."

"What else, master?" she asked wistfully.

"Only this: can you be content year after year with study, solitude, steady progress, and in time fame for yourself, but never any knowledge of love as Alfred paints it?"

"Never, Yorke?"

"Never, Cecil!"

She shivered, as if the words fell cold upon her heart, all the glad light and color faded from her face, and she looked about her with longing eyes, as if the sunshine had gone out of her life forever. Yorke saw the change, and a momentary expression of pity softened the stern determination of his face.

"This never would have happened but for that romantic boy," he thought. "There shall be no more of it, and a little pain now shall spare us all misunderstanding hereafter. Cecil," he said aloud, "love makes half the misery of the world; it has been the bane of my life, — it has made me what I am, a man without ambition, hope or happiness, — and out of my own bitter experience I warn you to beware of it. You know nothing of it yet, and if you are to stay with me you never will, unless this boy's folly has done more harm than I suspect. Carving Cupid has filled your head with fancies that will do you no good; banish them and be what I would have you."

"A marble woman like your Psyche, with no heart to love you, only grace and beauty to please your eye and bring you honor; is that what you would have me?"

He started, as if she had put some hidden purpose into words; his eye went from the gleaming statue to the pale girl, and saw that he had worked out his design in stone, but not yet in that finer material given him to mould well or ill. He did not see the pain and passion throbbing in her heart; he only saw her steady eyes; he only heard her low-spoken question, and answered it, believing that he served her better than she knew.

"Yes, I would have you beautiful and passionless as Psyche, a creature to admire with no fear of disturbing its quiet heart, no fear of endangering one's own. I am kinder than I seem in saying this, for I desire to save you from the pain I have known. Stay with me always, if you can, but remember, Cecil, I am done with love."

"I shall remember, sir."

Yorke left her, glad to have the task over, for it had not been as easy as he fancied. Cecil listened and answered with her usual submission, stood motionless till the sound of a closing door assured her that he was gone, then a look of sharp anguish banished the composure of her face, and a woman's

passionate pride trembled in her voice as she echoed his last words, —

"I am done with love!"

And, lifting the little Cupid, she let it drop broken at her feet.

## CHAPTER III.

### GERMAIN.

For a week, Cecil saw little of Yorke, as, contrary to his custom, he was out a greater part of each day, and when at home was so taciturn and absorbed that he was scarcely more than a shadow in the house. She asked no questions, appeared unconscious of any change, and worked busily upon a new design, thinking bitter thoughts the while. Alfred never came, and Cecil missed him; but Yorke was well satisfied, for the purpose formed so long ago had never changed; and though the young man's love endangered its fulfillment, that cloud had passed by, leaving the girl all his own again. She, too, seemed to cherish some purpose, that soon showed its influence over her; for her face daily grew more cold and colorless, her manner quieter, her smiles fewer, her words briefer, her life more nun-like than ever, till unexpected events changed the current of her thoughts, and gave her new mysteries to brood over.

One evening, as Cecil sat drawing, while Yorke paced restlessly up and down, he said suddenly, after watching her several minutes, —

"Cecil, will you do me a great favor?"

"With pleasure, if I can and ought," she answered, without pausing in her work.

"I am sure you can, I think you ought, yet I cannot explain why I ask it, although it will annoy and perplex you. Will you have faith in me, and believe that what I do is done for the best?"

"I trust you, sir; you have taught me to bear in silence many things that perplex and annoy me, so I think I can promise to bear one more."

Something in her meek answer seemed to touch him like a reproach, for his voice softened as he said regretfully, —

"I know I am not all I might be to you, but the day may come when you will see that I have spared you greater troubles, and made my dull home a safer shelter than it seems."

"He took a turn or two, then stopped again, asking abruptly, —

"A gentleman is to dine with me tomorrow; will you do the honors of the house?"

It was impossible to conceal the surprise which the unusual request produced, for during all the years they had been together, few strangers had been admitted, and Cecil, being shy, had gladly absented herself on these rare occasions. Now she laid down her pencil, and looked up at him, with mingled reluctance and astonishment in her face.

"How can I, when I know nothing of such things? Hester has always suited you till now."

"I have neglected many womanly accomplishments which you should have acquired, this among them; now you shall learn to be the little mistress of the house, and leave Hester in her proper place. Will you oblige me, Cecil?"

Yorke spoke as if discharging a painful duty which had been imposed upon him; Cecil was quick to see this, and any pleasure she might have felt in the proposal was destroyed by this uneasy manner.

"As you please, sir," was all her answer.

"Thank you; now one thing more. Have n't you a plain gray gown?"

"Yes."

"Be kind enough to wear it tomorrow, instead of that white one, which is more becoming, but too peculiar to appear in before strangers. This, also, I want altered; let me show you how."

He untied the band that held her hair, and as it fell upon her shoulders, he gathered the dark locks plainly back into a knot behind, smoothing away the ripples on her forehead, and the curls that kept breaking from his hold.

"Wear it so tomorrow. Look in the glass, and see how I mean," he said, as he surveyed the change he had effected.

She looked, and smiled involuntarily, though a vainer girl would have frowned, for the alteration added years to her age apparently; destroyed the beautiful outline of her face, and robbed her head of its most graceful ornament.

"You wish me to look old and plain, I see. If you like it, I am satisfied."

He looked annoyed at her quickness in divining his purpose, and shook out the curls again, as he said hastily, —

"I do wish it, for my guest worships beauty, and I have no desire for more love-passages at present."

"No fear of that till poor Alf is forgotten."

She spoke proudly, and took up her pencil as if weary of the subject. Yorke stood for a moment, wondering if she found it hard to forget "poor Alf," but he said no more, and sat down as if a load was off his mind. Opening a book, he seemed to read, but Cecil heard no leaves turned, and a covert glance showed him regarding the page with absent eyes and a melancholy expression that troubled her. There had been a time when she would have gone to him with affectionate solicitude, but not now; and though her heart was full of sympathy, she dared not show it, so sat silent till the clock struck ten, then with a quiet "Good-night," was gone.

"We shall dine at six; I'll ring for you when Germain comes," said Yorke, as they came in from their walk the following day.

"I shall be ready, sir."

Cecil watched and waited for the stranger's arrival, in a flutter of expectation, which proved, that, in spite of Yorke's severe training, feminine curiosity was not yet dead. She heard Anthony admit the guest, heard Yorke receive him, and heard the old woman who came to help Hester on such occasions ejaculate from behind a door, "Bless me, what a handsome man!" But minute after minute passed, and no bell rung, no summons came for her. The clock was on the stroke of six, and she was thinking sorrowfully that he had forgotten her, when Yorke's voice was heard at the door, saying, with unusual gentleness, —

"Come, Cecil; it is time."

"I thought you were to ring for me," she said, as they went down together.

"And I thought it more respectful to come and wait upon the little mistress, than to call her like a servant. How your heart beats! You need fear nothing: I shall be near you, child."

He took her by the hand with a protecting gesture that surprised her, but a moment later she understood both speech and action. A gentleman was standing at the far end of the room, and as they noiselessly approached, Cecil had time to mark the grace and strength of his tall figure, the ease of his attitude, the beauty of the hands loosely locked together behind him, before Yorke spoke.

"Germain, my ward, Miss Stein."

He turned quickly, and the eyes that Ce-

cil was shyly averting dilated with undisguised astonishment, for a single glance assured her that Germain was the mysterious model. Her hand closed over Yorke's, trembling visibly, as the stranger, in a singularly musical voice and with an unmistakably high-bred air, paid his compliments to Miss Stein.

"Control yourself, and bear with this man for my sake, Cecil," whispered Yorke as he led her to a seat, and placed himself so as to screen her for a moment.

She did control herself, for that had been her earliest lesson, and she had learned it well. She did bear with this man, for whom she felt such an aversion, and when he offered his arm to lead her in to dinner, she took it, though her eyes never met his, and she spoke not a word. It was long before she ventured to steal a look at him, and when she did so, it was long before she looked away again. The old woman was right, he was a handsome man; younger apparently than his host, and dressed with an elegance that Yorke had never attempted. Black hair and beard, carefully arranged, brilliant dark eyes, fine features, and that persuasive voice, all helped to make a most attractive person, for now the sinister expression was replaced by one of the serenest suavity, the stealthy gait and gestures exchanged for a graceful carriage, and some agreeable change seemed to have befallen both the man and his fortunes, as there was no longer any appearance of mystery or poverty about him. Cecil observed these things with a woman's quickness, and smiled to think she had ever feared the gay and gallant gentleman. Then she turned to examine Yorke, and saw that the accustomed gravity of his face was often disturbed by varying emotions; for sometimes it was sad, then stern, then tender, and more than once his eye met hers with a grateful look, as if he thanked her for granting him a greater favor than she knew.

Cecil performed her duties gracefully and well, but said little, and listened attentively to the conversation, which never strayed from general subjects. Though interested, she was not sorry when Yorke gave her the signal to withdraw, and went away into the drawing-room. Here, leaning in an easy-chair before the fire, she hoped to enjoy a quiet half-hour, at least, but was disappointed. Happening to lift her eyes to the mirror over the low chimney-piece, to study

the effect of the plain bands of hair, she saw another face beside her own, and became aware that Mr. Germain was intently watching her in the glass, as he leaned upon the high back of her chair. Meeting her eyes, he came and stood upon the rug, which Judas yielded to him with a surly growl. Cecil arrested the dog, feeling a sense of security while he was by, for the childish dread was not yet quite gone, and, despite his promises, Yorke did not appear. Germain seemed to understand the meaning of her hasty glance about the room, and answered it.

"Your guardian will follow presently, and sent me on to chat with you meantime. Permit me."

As he spoke, Anthony entered, bringing coffee, but Germain brought Cecil's cup himself, and served her with an air of devotion that both confused and pleased her by its novelty. Drawing a chair to the other side of the tiny table between them, he sat down, and before she knew it, Cecil found herself talking to this dreaded person, shyly at first, then frankly, and with pleasure.

"How was the great Rachel last night, Miss Stein?"

"I did not see her, sir."

"Ah, you prefer the opera, as I do, perhaps?"

"I never went."

"Then Yorke should take you, if you love music."

"I do next to my art, but I seldom hear any."

"Your art, — then you are to be a sculptor?"

"I hope to be in time, but I have much to learn."

"You will go to Italy before long, I fancy? that is part of every artist's education."

"No, sir: I shall not go. Yorke has been, and can teach me all I need."

"You have no desire for it then? or do you wait till some younger guardian appears, who has not seen Italy, and can show it to you as it should be shown?"

"I shall never have any guardian but Yorke. We have already settled that" —

Here Cecil paused, for Germain looked at her keenly, smiled, and said significantly, —

"Pardon me, I had not learned that he intended to end his romance in the good old fashion, by making his fair ward his wife. I am an early friend, and have a right to

take an interest in his future, so I offer my best wishes."

"You mistake me, sir; I should not have said that. Yorke is my guardian, nothing more, nor will he ever be. I have no father, and he tries to be one to me."

Cecil spoke with a bashful eagerness, burning cheeks and downcast eyes, unconscious of the look of relief that passed over her companion's face as she explained.

"A thousand pardons; my mistake was natural, and may prove a prophecy. Now let me atone for it by asking how the *Psyche* prospers. Is it worthy of its maker and its model?"

"It is done, and very beautiful; every one who sees it thinks it worthy of its maker, except me. I know he will do nobler things than that. He had no model but his own design: you have seen that, perhaps?"

"I see it now," he answered, bowing.

"Indeed I am not; he never makes a model of me now, except for a moment. He has had none since you left."

A curious expression swept over Germain's face, and he exclaimed, with ill-disguised satisfaction, —

"*You recognize me then? I was not sure that you had ever seen me, though I used to haunt this house like a restless spirit, as I am.*"

"Yes, I knew you at once, because I never could forget the fright you gave me, years ago, peeping in, the night I came. Since then, I've seen you several times, but never heard your name until yesterday."

"That is like Yorke: he hides his good deeds, and when I was most unfortunate, he befriended me, and more than once has kept me from what fate seems bent on making me, a solitary vagabond. The world goes better with me now, and one day I hope to take my proper place again; till then, I must wait to pay the debt I owe him."

This impulsive speech went straight to Cecil's heart, and banished the last trace of distrust. In the little pause that followed, she found time to wonder why Yorke did not come, and thinking of him, she asked if he would approve all she had been saying. A moment's recollection showed her that she had unconsciously given her companion many hints of the purposes, pursuits and prospects of her life, during that seemingly

careless conversation. She felt uncomfortable, and hoping Yorke had not heard her, sat silent until Germain spoke again.

"I see an instrument yonder, let me lead you to it, for having owned that you love music, you cannot deny me the pleasure of listening to it."

Fearing to commit herself again, if she continued to talk, Cecil complied, but as they crossed the room together, she saw Yorke standing in the shadow of a curtained window. He made a warning sign, that caused her to hesitate an instant, trying to understand it; Germain's quick eye followed hers like a flash, and kindled with sudden fire; but before either could speak, Yorke advanced, saying gravely, —

"Will you venture, Cecil? Germain is a connoisseur in music."

"Then I dare not try; please let me refuse," she answered, drawing back; for now she comprehended that she was not to sing.

But Germain led her on, saying, with his most persuasive air, —

"You will not refuse me presently, when I have given you courage by doing my part first."

He sat down as he spoke, and began to sing; Cecil was stealing back to her seat, but paused in the act to listen; for a moment stood undecided, then turned, and slowly, step by step, drew nearer, like a fascinated bird, till she was again beside him, forgetful now of everything but the wonderful voice that filled the room with its mellow music. As it ceased, she gave a long sigh of pleasure, and exclaimed, like a delighted child, —

"Oh! sing again; it is so beautiful!"

Germain flashed a meaning glance over his shoulder at Yorke, who stood apart, gloomily watching them.

"Sit then, and let me do my best to earn a song from you," and placing a chair for her, he gave her music such as she had never dreamed of, as song after song poured from his lips, stirring her with varying emotions, as the airs were plaintive, passionate or gay.

"Now may I claim my reward?" he said, at length, and Cecil; without a thought of Yorke, gladly obeyed him.

Why she chose a little song her mother used to sing she could not tell: it came to her, and she sang it with all her heart, giving the tender words with unwonted spirit and sweetness. Sitting in her seat, Ger-

main leaned his arm upon the instrument, and watched her with absorbing interest. Unconsciously, she had pushed away the heavy bands that annoyed her, and now showed again the fair forehead with its delicate brows; her cheeks were rosy with excitement, her eyes shone, her lips smiled as she sang, and in spite of the gray gown with no ornament but a little knot of pansies, Cecil had never looked more beautiful than now. When she ended, she was surprised to see that this strange man's eyes were full of tears, and instead of compliments, he only pressed her hand, saying, with lowered voice, —

"I cannot thank you as I would for this."

Yorke called the girl to him, and Germain slowly followed. At dinner, he had led the conversation, now he left it to his host, saying little, but sitting with his eyes on Cecil, who, to her own surprise and Yorke's visible disquiet, did not feel abashed nor offended by the pertinacious gaze. He lingered long, and went with evident reluctance, bidding Cecil good-night in a tone so like the mysterious "My darling," that she retreated hastily, convinced that it must have been uttered by himself alone.

"How do you like this gentleman?" asked Yorke, returning from a somewhat protracted farewell in the hall.

"Very much. But why did n't you tell me who I was to see?"

"I had a fancy to test your powers of self-control," he replied; "and I was satisfied."

"I will take care that you shall be, sir," she answered, with set lips, and a flash of the eye.

"You seem to have quite outlived your old dislike, and quite forgotten his last offence," continued Yorke, as if ill pleased at it all.

"I am no longer a silly child, and I have not forgotten his offence; but as you overlooked the insult, I could not refuse to meet your guest when you bade me to bear with him for your sake."

There was an air of dignity about her, and a touch of sarcasm in her tone, that

was both new and becoming, yet it ruffled Yorke, though he disdained to show it.

"Of one thing I am satisfied, seclude a woman as you may, when an opportunity comes, she will find her tongue. I did not know my silent girl tonight."

"You heard me, then? I am sorry, but I did not know what I was doing till it was done. You gave me a part to play, and I am no actress, as you see. Is the masquerade over now?"

"Yes, and it has not proved as successful as I hoped, yet I am glad it was no worse."

"So am I," and Cecil shook down her hair with an aspect of relief.

"Where are your pansies?" Yorke asked suddenly.

"They fell out as I was singing, they must have dropped just here," and she looked all about, but no pansies were visible.

"I thought so," muttered Yorke. "I shall repent this night's experiment, I fear, but God knows I did it for the best."

Cecil stood, thoughtfully coiling a dark lock around her finger for a moment, then she asked wistfully, —

"Will Mr. Germain come again? He said he hoped to do so, when he went."

"He will not, rest assured of that," answered Yorke grimly, adding, as if against his will, "He is a treacherous and dangerous man, in spite of his handsome face and charming manners. Beware of him, child, and shun him, if you would preserve your peace: mine is already lost."

"Then why do you" —

There she checked herself, remembering that she was not to ask questions.

"Why do I bring him here? you would ask. That I shall never tell you, and it will never happen again, for the old spell is as strong as ever, I find."

He spoke bitterly, because in the girl's face he saw the first sign of distrust, and it wounded him deeply. It had been a hard evening for him, and he had hoped for a different result, but his failure was made manifest, as Cecil bowed her mute good-night, and went away more perplexed than ever.

## A MARBLE WOMAN.

BY A. M. BARNARD, AUTHOR OF "V. V., OR PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS."

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### CHAPTER IV.

#### IN THE DARK.

Days passed, and Germain did not re-appear, though Cecil strongly suspected that he had endeavored to do so more than once; for now the door was always locked. Anthony often mounted guard in the hall, Yorke seldom went out, and when they walked together chose a new route each day, while his face wore a vigilant expression as if he were perpetually on the watch. These changes kept the subject continually before the girl's mind, though not a word was spoken. More than once she caught glimpses of a familiar figure haunting the street, more than once she heard the mellow voice singing underneath her window, and more than once she longed to see this strange Germain again.

Standing at the window one sombre afternoon, she thought of these things as she watched her guardian giving orders to Anthony, who was working in the garden. As Yorke turned to enter the house, she remembered that the studio was not lighted as he liked to find it, and hurried away to have it ready for his coming. Half-way up the first flight she stopped a moment, for a gust of fresh air blew up from below as if from some newly opened door or window. The hall was dusky with early twilight, and looking downward she saw nothing.

"Is that you, Yorke?" she asked; but no one answered, and she went on her way. At the top of the second flight she paused again, fancying that she heard steps behind her. The sound ceased as she stopped, and thinking to herself, "It's Judas," she ran up the spiral stairs leading to the tower. These were uncarpeted, and in a moment the sound of steps was distinctly audible behind her; neither the slow tread of Yorke, nor the quick patter of the dog, but soft

and stealthy footfalls as of some one anxious to follow unsuspected. She paused, and the steps paused also; she went on, and the quick sound began again; she peered downward through the gloom, but the stairs wound abruptly round and round, and nothing could be seen. She called to Yorke and the dog again, but there was no reply except the rustle of garments brushing against the wall, and the rapid breathing of a human creature. A nervous thrill passed over her; the thought of Germain flashed into her mind, and the early terror woke again, for time and place suggested the forbidding figure she had seen lurking there so long ago. Fearing to descend and meet him, she sprang on, hoping to reach the studio in time to call Yorke from the window, and lock the door. As she darted upward, the quick tread of a man's foot was plainly heard, and when she flung the door behind her, a strong hand prevented it from closing, a tall figure entered, the key was turned, and Germain's well-remembered voice exclaimed,—

"Do not cry out. I have risked my life by entering at a window, for I must speak to you, and Yorke guards you like a dragon."

"Why do you come if he forbids it, following and frightening me in the dark?" cried Cecil, grasping vainly for a lamp as Germain placed himself between her and the window.

"But he keeps you from me, and he has no right to do it. I love you as he never can, yet though I plead day and night, and promise anything, he will not let me see you, even for an hour. Do not fear or shun me, but come to me, little Cecil, come to me, and let me feel that you are mine."

With voice and gesture of intensest love and longing, he advanced as if to claim her, but Cecil, terrified by this impetuous woo-

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ing, fled before him to an inner room, bolted the door, and rang the bell until it broke. Vainly Germain shook the door, and implored her to hear him; she neither answered nor listened, but called for help till the room rang again. Soon, very soon, Yorke's familiar step came leaping up the stairs, and his voice demanded, in tones of wonder and alarm, —

"Cecil, where are you? Speak to me, and open instantly."

"I cannot come, — it is Germain" —

More she could not say, for with the arrival of help her strength deserted her, and she dropped down upon the floor, faint but not unconscious. Lying thus, she heard the outer door give way, heard a wrathful exclamation from Yorke, an exultant laugh from Germain, then hurried conversation too low for her to catch a word, till suddenly both voices rose, one defiant, the other determined.

"I tell you. Basil, I will see her!"

"Not if I can prevent it."

"Then I swear I will use force!"

"I swear you shall not!"

A quick movement followed, and the terrified listener heard unmistakable sounds of a fierce but brief struggle in the darkened room, the stamp of feet, the hard breathing of men wrestling near at hand, the crash of a falling statue and a human body, a low groan, then sudden silence. In that silence Cecil lost her consciousness, for her quiet life had ill prepared her for such scenes. Only for a moment, however; the sound of retreating footsteps recalled her, and trying to control the frightened flutter of her heart, she listened breathlessly. What had happened? Where was Yorke? These questions roused her, and the longing to answer them gave her courage to venture from her refuge.

Softly drawing the bolt, she looked out. Nothing could be seen but the pale glimmer of stars through the western window; all near at hand was hidden by the deep shadow of a tall screen that divided the studio. A moment she stood trembling with apprehension lest Germain had not gone, then stole a few steps forward, whispering, —

"Yorke, are you here?"

There was no answer, but as the words left her lips she stumbled over something at her feet, something that stirred and faintly sighed. Losing fear in an all-absorbing anxiety, Cecil sprang boldly forward, groped

for a match, lighted the lamp with trembling hands, and looked about her. The beautiful Psyche lay headless on the ground, but the girl scarcely saw it, for half underneath it lay Yorke, pale and senseless. How she dragged him out she never knew; superhuman strength seemed given her, and self-possession to think and do her best for him. Throwing up the window, she called to Anthony, still busy in the garden, then bathed the white face, fanned the breathless lips, chafed the cold hands, and soon had the joy of seeing Yorke's eyes open with a conscious look.

"It is I. Where are you hurt? What shall I do for you, dear master?"

"Tell them the Psyche fell, nothing more," he answered painfully, but with a clear mind and a commanding glance.

She understood and obeyed him when the old man arrived. With many exclamations of concern and much wonderment as to how the accident could have occurred, Anthony laid his master on the couch, gave him such restoratives as were at hand, and then went to fetch a surgeon, and find Hester, who was gossiping in a neighbor's kitchen, according to her wont.

"Tell me what happened, my poor child," whispered Yorke, when they were alone, and Cecil sat beside him with a face almost as pallid as his own.

"Not now, you are not fit. Wait a little," she began; but he interrupted her, saying with a look she dared not disobey, —

"No; tell me now, — I must know it!"

She told him, but he seemed too weak for indignation, and looked up at her with a faint glimmer of his old sarcastic smile.

"Another lover, Cecil, and a strange one; but you need not fear him, for though as rash and headstrong as a boy, he will not harm you." Then Yorke's face changed and darkened as he said earnestly, "Promise me that you will never listen to him, never meet him, or countenance his mad pursuit of you. No good can come of it to you, and only the bitterest disappointment to me. Promise me this, I implore you, Cecil."

She hesitated, but his face grew haggard with suspense, and something in her own heart pleaded for him more persuasively than his anxious eyes or urgent words.

"I promise this," she said: "Now rest, and let me fan you, for your lips are white with pain."



He did not speak again till steps and voices were heard approaching; then he drew her down to him, whispering, —

"Not a word of Germain to any one; keep near me till I am up again, then I will take measures to prevent the recurrence of a scene like this."

For several days Yorke saw no one but the doctor and his servants, for the fall and the heavy weight upon his chest had seriously injured him. He rebelled against the order to be still, finding a single week's confinement very irksome with no society but Hester, no occupation but a book of his own thoughts. Cecil did not come to nurse him as she used to do when slighter indispositions kept him in his rooms. She sent no little gifts to tempt his appetite or enliven his solitude; she made daily inquiries for his health, but nothing more. He missed his familiar spirit and her gentle ministrations, but would not send for her, thinking, with a mixture of satisfaction and regret, —

"She takes me at my word, and perhaps it's better so, for absence will soon cure any girlish pique my frankness may have caused her."

But though he would not call her, he left his room sooner than was wise, and went to find her in the studio. Everything was in its accustomed order, Cecil at her place, and his first exclamation one of pleasant surprise.

"Why, here's my Psyche mended and mounted again! Many thanks, my little girl."

She went to take the hand he offered, saying very quietly, —

"I am glad to see you, master, and to find you like what I have done."

"I never thought my Psche would cause me so much suffering, but I forgive her for beauty's sake," answered Yorke, laughing, for an unusual cheerfulness possessed him, and it was pleasant to be back to his old haunt again. "Well, what do you see in it?" he asked, observing that the girl stood with her eyes fixed on the statue.

"I see my model."

He remembered his own words, and was glad to change the conversation by a question or two.

"How have you got on through these days that have been so wearisome to me? Have you missed the old master?"

"I have been busily at work, and I have

missed you, for I often want help, and Tony cannot always walk with me."

Yorke felt slightly disappointed both at the answer and her welcome, but showed no sign of it as he said, —

"Nothing has been seen of Germain since his last freak, I fancy?"

"He has been here."

"The deuce he has!" ejaculated Yorke, looking amazed. "Did you see him, Cecil?"

"Yes; I could not help it. I was watching for the doctor one day, and hearing a ring, I opened the door, for Tony and Hester were with you. Germain stepped quickly in, and asked, 'Is Yorke alive?' I said yes. 'I thank God for that!' he cried. 'Tell him to get well in peace; I'll not disturb him if I can keep away' — Then Anthony appeared, and he was gone as quickly as he came."

"That was like him, reckless and generous, fierce and gentle by turns. Pity that so fine a nature should be wrecked so early."

Yorke mused a moment, and Cecil, as if anxiety or pity made her forget her promise, asked suddenly, —

"Shall you let him go unmolested after such an outrage as this?"

"Yes: even if he had half murdered me or maimed me for life, I would not lift a finger against him. God knows I have my faults, and plenty of them, but I can forgive blows like his, easier than gentler hands have dealt me."

Cecil made no answer, but seemed lost in wonderment, till Yorke, observing how pale and heavy-eyed she looked, said kindly, —

"Have you, too, been ill? I asked for you every day, and Hester always gave a good report. Is anything amiss? Tell me, child."

"I am not ill, and nothing is amiss except that I do not sleep, owing to want of exercise, perhaps."

"This must be mended; I'll give you sleep tonight, and tomorrow we will have a long drive together."

Going to an ancient cabinet he took from it a quaint flask, poured a few drops of some dark liquid into a tiny glass, and mingling it with water, brought it to her.

"It is bitter, but it will bring you deep and dreaming sleep. Drink, little wakeful spirit, drink and rest."

Without offering to take the glass, she

bent and drank, not the first bitter draught his hand had given her.

"I think you would drink hemlock without a question if I gave it to you," he said, smiling at her mute obedience.

"I think I should. But I ask no questions now, because I knew that this was laudanum. Mamma used it when in pain, and I have often tasted it, playing that I made it sweet for her."

Yorke turned hastily away as if to replace the flask and cup, and when he spoke again he was his gravest self.

"Go now, and sleep, Cecil. Tomorrow the old quiet life shall begin again."

It did begin again, and week after week, month after month passed in the same monotonous seclusion. They went nowhere, saw scarcely any one; Yorke's genius was almost unknown, Cecil's beauty blooming unscen; and so the year rolled slowly by.

## CHAPTER V.

### GOSSIP.

Putting his head into the studio where Cecil was at work as usual, and Yorke lounged on the sofa in a most unwonted fit of indolence, "Mrs. Norton's compliments, and can she see the master for a few minutes?" said Anthony.

"Alfred's mother! what next? I'll come, Tony," answered the master, turning to observe the effect of this announcement on the girl.

But she scarcely seemed to have heard the question or answer, and went on smoothing the rounded limbs of a slender Faun, with an aspect of entire absorption.

"What an artist I have made of her, if a lump of clay is more interesting than the news of her first lover!" thought her guardian, as he left the room with a satisfied smile.

Since Alfred's disappointment, there had been a breach between the neighbors, and his mother discontinued the friendly calls she had been wont to make since Cecil came. She was a grayhaired, gracious lady, with much of her son's frankness and warmth of manner. After a few moments spent in general inquiries, she said, with some embarrassment, but with her usual directness, —

"Mr. Yorke, I have felt it my duty to come and tell you certain things, of which I

think you should be informed without delay. You lead such a secluded life that you are not likely to hear any of the injurious rumors that are rife concerning Cecil and yourself. They are but natural, for any appearance of mystery or of peculiarity always excites curiosity and gossip; and, as a woman and a neighbor, I venture to warn you of them, because I take a deep interest in the girl, both for her own sake and my son's."

"I thank you, Mrs. Norton, and I beg you will speak freely. I am entirely ignorant of these rumors, though I know that tattling tongues find food for scandal in the simplest affairs."

The guest saw that the subject was distasteful to her host, but steadily continued, —

"While she was a child, the relationship of guardian and ward was all sufficient; but now that she is a woman, it strikes outside observers that you are too young a man to be her sole companion. It is known that you live here together with no society, few friends, and those chiefly gentlemen; that you have neither governess nor housekeeper, only an old female servant. Cecil goes nowhere, and never walks without yourself or Anthony; while her beauty attracts so much attention, that interest and curiosity are unavoidably aroused and increased by the peculiarity of her life. It would be a trying task to repeat the reports and remarks that have come to me; you can imagine them, and feel how much pain they cause me, although I know them to be utterly groundless and unjust."

Intense annoyance was visible in Yorke's face, as he listened and answered haughtily, —

"Those who know me will need no denial of these absurd rumors. I care nothing for the idle gossip of strangers; nor does Cecil, being too innocent to dream that such things exist."

"But you know it, sir, and you know, while a man may defy public opinion, and pass scathless, a woman must submit and walk warily, if she would keep her name unsullied by slander's breath. A time may come when she will learn this, and reproach you with unfaithfulness to your charge if you neglect to surround her with the safeguards which she is, as yet, too innocent to know that she needs."

Mrs. Norton spoke earnestly, and her

maternal solicitude for the motherless girl touched Yorke's heart, for he had one, though he had done his best to starve and freeze it. His manner softened, his eye grew anxious, and he asked, with an air of one convinced in spite of himself, —

"What would you have me do? I sincerely desire to be faithful to my duty, but I begin to fear that I have undertaken more than I can perform."

"May I suggest that the presence of a respectable gentlewoman in your house would most effectually silence busy tongues, and might be a great advantage to Miss Stein, who must suffer for the want of female society?"

"I have tried that plan, and it failed too entirely to make me willing to repeat the experiment."

A slight flush on Yorke's dark cheek and a disdainful curl of the lips told the keen-eyed lady, as plainly as words, that the cause of the dismissal of a former governess had been too much devotion to the guardian, too little to the ward. Mrs. Norton was silent a moment, and then said, with some hesitation, —

"May I ask you a very frank question, Mr. Yorke?"

"Your interest in Cecil gives you a right to ask anything, madam," he replied, bowing with the grace of manner which he could assume at will.

"Then let me inquire if you intend to make this girl your wife at some future time?"

"Nothing can be further from my intentions," was the brief but decided reply.

"Pardon me; Alfred received an impression that you were educating her for that purpose, and I thought it might be so. I hoped it might be so. I can suggest nothing else, unless some other gentleman is permitted to give the protection of his name and home. My poor boy still loves her, in spite of absence, time and efforts to forget; he is still eager to win her, and I would gladly be a mother to the sweet girl. Is there no hope for him?"

"None, I assure you. She loves nothing but her art, as I just had an excellent proof; for when you were announced, and your son's name mentioned, she seemed to hear nothing, remember nothing, but worked on, undisturbed."

Mrs. Norton rose, disappointed and disheartened by the failure of her mission.

"I have ventured too far, perhaps; but it seemed a duty, and I have performed it as best I could. I shall not intrude again, but I earnestly entreat you to think of this, for the girl's sake, and take immediate steps to contradict these injurious rumors. Call upon me freely, if I can aid you in any way, and assure Cecil that I am still her friend, although I may have seemed estranged since Alfred's rejection."

Yorke thanked her warmly, promised to give the matter his serious consideration, and bade her adieu, with a grateful respect that won her heart, in spite of sundry prejudices against him. As the door closed behind her, he struck his hands impatiently together, saying to himself, —

"I might have known it would be so! Why did I keep the child until I cannot do without her, forgetting that she would become a woman, and bring trouble as inevitably as before? I'll not have another companion to beset me with the romantic folly I've foresworn; neither will I marry Cecil to silence these malicious gossips; I'll take her away from here, and in some quiet place we will find the old peace, if possible."

In pursuance of this purpose, he announced that he was going away upon business that might detain him several days, and after many directions, warnings and misgivings, he went. He was gone a week, for the quiet place was not easily found, and while he looked, he saw and heard enough to convince him that Mrs. Norton was right. He took pains to gather, from various sources, the reports to which she had alluded, and was soon in a fever of indignation and disgust. Her words haunted him; he soon saw clearly the wrong he had been doing Cecil, felt that his present plan would but increase it, and was assured that one of two things must be done without delay, either provide her with a chaperone or marry her himself, for he rebelled against the idea of giving her to any other. The chaperone was the wisest but most disagreeable expedient, for well he knew that a third person, however discreet and excellent, would destroy the seclusion and freedom which he loved so well, and had enjoyed so long. It was in every respect repugnant to him, and he believed it would be to Cecil also. The other plan, to his own surprise, did not seem so impossible or distasteful; and, the more he thought of it,

the more attractive it became. Nothing need be changed except her name, slander would be silenced, and her society secured to him for life. But would she consent to such a marriage? He recalled with pleasure the expression of her face when she went to him, saying, "I will never leave you, my dear master, never," and half regretted that he had checked the growth of the softer sentiment, which seemed about to take the place of her childish affection. He did not love her as a husband should, but he felt how sweet it was to be beloved, knew that she was happy with him, and longed to keep his little ward, at any cost, to himself.

Still undecided, but full of new and not unpleasurable fancies, he hurried home, feeling a strong curiosity to know how Cecil would regard this proposition should he make it. No one ran to meet him, as he entered, no one called out a glad welcome, and the young face that used to brighten when he came was nowhere visible.

"Where is Miss Cecil?" he asked of Hester.

"In the garden, master," she answered, with a significant nod, that sent him to the nearest window that opened on the garden.

Cecil was walking there with Alfred, and Yorke's face darkened ominously, as a jealous fear assailed him that she was about to solve the question for herself. He eyed her keenly, but her face was half averted, and he could see that she listened intently to her companion, who talked rapidly, and with an expression that made his handsome face more eloquent than his ardent voice.

"Cecil!" called Yorke sharply, unwilling to prolong a scene that angered him more than he would confess, even to himself.

Alfred looked up, bowed with a haughty, half-defiant air, said a few words to Cecil, and leaped the wall again. But she, after one glance upward, went in so slowly that her guardian chafed at the delay, and when at length she came to him with a cold hand-clasp, and a tranquil, "Home so soon?" he answered almost harshly, —

"Too soon, perhaps. Why do I find that boy here? I thought he was away again."

"He is going soon, and came because he could not keep away, he said. Poor Alf! I wish he did not care for me so much."

While she was speaking, Yorke examined her with a troubled look, for that brief absence made him quick to see the changes a

year had wrought, unobserved till now. Something was gone that once made her beauty a delight to heart as well as to eye; some nameless but potent charm that gave warmth, grace and tenderness to her dawning womanhood. He felt it, and for the first time found a flaw in what he had thought faultless until now. There was no time to analyze the feeling; for, drawing away the hand he had detained, she brought him from her desk three letters, directed to herself in a man's bold writing.

"Germain!" exclaimed Yorke, as his eye fell on them. "Has he dared to write, when he swore he would not? Have you read them?"

She turned them in his hand, and showed the seals unbroken. A flash of pleasure banished the disquiet from his face, and there was no harshness in his voice as he asked, —

"How did they come? I forbade Tony to receive any communication he might venture to make."

"Tony knows nothing of them. One came in a bouquet, which was tossed over the wall the very day you went; one was brought by a carrier-dove, soon afterward; the bird came pecking at my window, and, thinking it was hurt, I took it in; the third was thrust into my hand by some one whom I did not see, as I was walking with Hester yesterday. I suspected who they were from, and did not open them, because I promised not to listen to this man."

"Rare obedience in a woman! Have you no wish to see them? Will you give me leave to look at them before I burn them?"

"Do what you like. I care nothing for them now."

She spoke so confidently, and smiled so contentedly, as she stood folding up his gloves, that Yorke felt his purpose strengthening every instant. The letters confirmed it; for, as he flung the last into the fire, he said to himself, —

"There is no way but this; there will be peace for neither of us while Alfred and Germain have hopes of her. Once mine, I will have a legal right to banish both."

Turning with decision, he drew her down to a seat beside him, saying, in a tone he had not used since the Cupid was broken, —

"Sit here and listen, for I've many things to tell you, my little girl. You are eighteen tomorrow, and, according to your mother's

desire, may choose what guardian you will. I leave you free, having no right to influence you, but while I have a home it always will be yours if you are happy here."

She turned her face away, and for an instant some inward agitation marred its habitual repose, but she answered steadily, though there was an undertone of pain in her voice, —

"I know" it, Yorke, and you are very kind. I am happy here; but I cannot stay, because hard things are said of us, things that wrong you and wound me more than tongue can tell."

"Who told you this?" he demanded angrily.

"Alfred; he said I ought to know it, and if you would not follow his mother's advice, I should choose another guardian."

"And will you, Cecil?"

"Yes, for your sake as well as my own."

The tone of resolution made her soft voice jar upon his ear, and convinced him that she would keep her word.

"Whom will you choose?" he gravely asked.

"It is hard to tell; I have made no friends in all these years, and now I have nowhere to go, unless I turn to Mrs. Norton. She will be a mother to me, Alfred is a very gentle guardian, and in time I may learn to love him."

Yorke felt both reproached and satisfied, — reproached because it was his fault that the girl had made no friends, and satisfied because there was as much regret as resolution in her voice; and his task grew easier as he thought of Alfred, whom she should never learn to love.

"But you promised to stay with me, and I want you, Cecil."

"I did promise, but then I knew nothing of all this. I want to stay; but now I cannot, unless you do something to make it safe and best."

"Something shall be done. Will you have another governess or an elderly companion?" he asked, wishing to assure himself of her real feeling before he spoke more plainly.

She sighed, and looked all the repugnance that she felt, but answered sorrowfully, —

"I dread it more than you do, but there is no other way."

"One other way. Shall I name it?"

"Oh, yes! anything is better than another Miss Ulster."

"If my ward becomes my wife, gossip will be silenced, and we may still keep together all our lives."

He spoke very quietly, lest he should startle her; but his voice was eager, and his glance wistful, in spite of himself. The eager eyes, that had been lifted to his own, fell slowly, a faint color came up to her cheek, and she answered with a light shake of the head, as if more perplexed than startled, —

"How can I, when we don't care for one another?"

"But we do care for one another. I love you as if you were a child of my own, and I think, if nothing had disturbed us, that you would have chosen me to be your guardian for another year, at least, would you not?"

"Yes, you are my one friend, and this is home."

"Then stay, Cecil, and keep both. Nothing need be changed between us; to the world we can be husband and wife, here guardian and ward, as we have been for six pleasant years. No one can reproach or misjudge us then; I shall have the right to protect my little pupil, she to cling to her teacher and her friend. We are both solitary in the world: why can we not go on together in the old way, with the work we love and live for?"

"It sounds very pleasant, but I am so ignorant I cannot tell if it is best. Perhaps you will regret it if I stay, perhaps I shall become a burden when it is too late to put me away, and you may tire of the old life, with no one but a girl to share it with you."

Her face was downcast, and he did not see her eyes fill, her lips tremble, or the folded hands pressed tightly together, as she listened to the proposition which gave her a husband's name, but not a husband's heart. He saw that she thought only of him, forgetful of herself, — knew that he offered very little in exchange for the liberty of this young life, — and began to think that he had been mistaken in supposing that she loved him, because she showed so little emotion now; but in spite of all this, the purpose formed so long ago was still indomitable, and, though forced by circumstances to modify it, he would not relinquish his design. The relentless look replaced all others, as he rose to leave her, though he said, —

"Do not answer yet, think well of this. be assured that I desire it, shall be happy in

it, and see no other course open, unless you choose to leave me. Decide for yourself, my child, and, when we meet tomorrow, tell me which guardian you have chosen."

"I will."

Cecil was usually earliest down, but when the morrow came, Yorke waited for her, with an impatience that he could not control, and when she entered, he went to meet her, with an inquiring eye, an extended hand. She put her own into it without a word, and he grasped the little hand with a thrill of joy that surprised him as much as did the sudden impulse which caused him to stoop and kiss the beautiful, uplifted face that made the sunshine of his life.

Ashamed of this betrayal of his satisfaction, he controlled himself, and said, with as much of his usual composure as he could assume. —

"Thank you, Cecil; now all is decided, and you never shall regret this step, if I can help it. We will be married privately, and at once, then let the gossips tattle as they please."

"Are you quite satisfied with me for choosing as I have done?" she asked, as he led her to her place.

"Quite satisfied, quite proud and happy that my ward is to be mine forever. Is she content?"

"Yes, I chose what was pleasantest, and will do my best to be all you would have me, to thank you for giving me so much."

No more was said, and very soon all trace of any unusual emotion had vanished from Cecil's face. Not so with Yorke. A secret unrest possessed him, and did not pass away. He thought it was doubt, anxiety, remorse, perhaps, for what he was about to do; but try as he would, the inward excitement kept him from his usual pursuits, and made him long to have all over without delay. Feeling that he owed Mrs. Norton some explanation of his seeming caprice, he went to her, frankly stated his reasons for the change, and took counsel with her upon many matters. With the readiness of a generous nature, she put aside her own disappointment, and freely did her best for her peculiar neighbor, glad she had served the girl so well.

She soon convinced him that it would be better not to have a private wedding, but openly to marry and give the young wife a gay welcome home, that nothing mysterious or hasty should give fresh food for remark:

He yielded, for Cecil's sake, and the good lady, with a true woman's love of such affairs, soon had everything her own way, much to Yorke's annoyance, and Cecil's bewilderment. Alfred was gone, and his mother wisely left him in ignorance of the approaching marriage, and stifled many a sigh as she gave her orders and prepared the little bride.

Great was the stir and intense the surprise among the sculptor's few friends, when it was known what was afloat, and Yorke was driven half wild with questions, congratulations and praises of his betrothed. So much interest and good-will pleased even while it fretted him; and, bent on righting both himself and Cecil, in a manner that should preclude all further misconception, he asked friends and neighbors from far and near to his wedding, thinking, with a half-sad, half-scornful smile, "Let them come; they will see that she is lovely, will think that I am happy, and never guess what a mockery it is to me."

They did come, did think the bride beautiful, the bridegroom happy; and would have had no suspicion of the mockery, but for one little incident, that had undue effect upon the eager-eyed observers. Among the guests was one whom none of the others knew; a singularly handsome man, who glided in unannounced, just before the ceremony, and placed himself in the shadow of the draperies that hung before a deep window in the drawing-room. Two or three of the neighbors whispered together, and nodded their heads significantly, as if they had suspicions; but the entrance of the bridal pair hushed the whispers, and suspended the nods, for a time at least. As they took their places, Cecil was seen to start and change color when her eyes fell on the stranger, leaning in the purple gloom of the recess; Yorke did the same, then he frowned, she drew her veil about her, and stern bridegroom and pale bride appeared to compose themselves for the task before them.

The instant the ceremony was over, one gossip whispered to another, "I told you so, it is the same person who used to sing under her window, and watch the house for hours. A lover, without doubt, and why she preferred this gloomy Mr. Yorke to that devoted creature passes my comprehension."

"It's my opinion that she did n't prefer

him, but was persuaded into it. He's far too old and grave for such a young thing, and I suspect she agrees with me. Did you see her turn as pale as her dress when she saw that fine-looking man in the recess? Poor thing, it's plain to see that she is marrying from gratitude, or fear, or something of that sort."

This romantic fancy soon took wing, and flew from ear to ear, although the stranger vanished as suddenly as he came. Yorke caught a hint of it, but only smiled disdainfully, and watched Cecil with a keen sense of satisfaction, in the knowledge that she was all his own. Not only was his eye gratified by her beauty that day, but his pride also, for the admiration she excited would have satisfied the most enamored bridegroom. She seemed to have grown a woman suddenly, for gentle dignity replaced her former shyness, and she bore herself like a queen; pale as the flowers in her bosom, calm as the marble Psyche that adorned an alcove, and so like it that more than one enthusiastic gentleman begged Yorke to part with the statue, now that he possessed the beautiful model. All this flattered his pride as man and artist, enhanced his pleasure in the events of the day, roused his ambition that had slept so long, and banished his last doubt regarding the step he had so hastily taken.

When all was over, and the house quiet again, he roamed through the empty rooms, still odorous and bright with bridal decorations, looking for his wife, and smiling, as he spoke the word low to himself, for the pleasant excitement of the day was not yet gone. But nowhere did he see the slender white figure in the misty veil; her little glove lay where she dropped it when the ring was put on, her bouquet of roses and orange flowers was fading in the seat she left, and an array of glittering gifts still stood unexamined by their new mistress. Thinking she was worn out and had gone to rest, he went slowly toward the studio, wondering if he should not feel more like his old self in that familiar place. Passing Cecil's room, he saw that the door was open, and no one within but the newly hired maid, who was busy folding up the silvery gown.

"Where is Miss Cecil?" he asked.

"Mrs. Yorke is in the tower, sir," answered the woman, with a sliver at his mistake.

He bit his lip, and went on; but as he climbed the winding stairs, he passed his hand across his eyes, remembering a happy time, nineteen years ago, when that name had almost been another and a dearer woman's. Dressed in the plain gray gown, and with no change about her but the ring on the hand that caressed the dog's shaggy head, Cecil sat reading as if nothing had disturbed the usual quiet routine of her day. If she had looked up with a word of welcome or a smile of pleasure, it would have pleased him well, for his heart was very tender just then, and she was very like her mother. But she seemed unconscious of his presence till he stood before her, regarding her with the expression that was so attractive and so rare.

"Are you worn out with the bustle of the day, and so come here to rest and find yourself, as I do?" he asked, stroking the soft waves of her hair.

"Yes, I am tired, but I was never more myself than I have been today," she answered, turning a leaf, as if waiting to read on.

"What did it all seem like, Cecil?"

"A pretty play, but I was glad to have it over."

"It was a pretty play, though Germain might have spoilt it if I had not warned him away. But it is not quite over, as I was reminded on my way up. We must remember that before others I am your husband, and you my little wife, else I shall call you 'Miss Cecil' again, and you say 'master,' as you did half an hour ago."

"What would you have me do? I know I shall forget, for there is nothing to remind me but this," and she turned the ring to and fro upon her finger, adding, as he thought, regretfully, "It begins to make a difference already, and you said nothing would be changed."

"Nothing shall be changed, except that," he answered, chilled by her coldness, and turning sharply round, he seized chisel and mallet, and fell to work, regardless of bridal broadcloth and fine linen.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CECIL'S SECRET.

It was easy to say that nothing should be changed, but they soon found it very hard to prevent decided alterations in the lives of

both. Yorke's friends, rejoicing in the new tie that seemed about to give him back to the world he had shunned so long, did everything in their power to help on the restoration by all manner of festivities after the wedding. Having yielded once or twice by Mrs. Norton's advice, Yorke found it both difficult and irksome to seclude himself again, for it seemed as if a taste of the social pleasures neglected for so many years had effectually roused him from his gloom, and given him back his youth again. But the chief cause of the change was Cecil. Wherever she went she won such admiration that his pride was fostered by the praise it fed on, and, regarding her as his best work, he could not deny himself the satisfaction of beholding the homage paid his beautiful young wife. She submitted with her usual docility, yet expressed so little interest in anything but her art that he soon grew jealous of it, and often urged her to go pleasuring lest she should grow old and gray before her time, as he had done.

"Look your loveliest tonight, Cecil, for there will be many strangers at Coventry's, and I have promised him that my handsome wife would come," he said, as he came into the drawing-room one tempestuous afternoon and found her looking out into the deserted street where the rain fell in torrents and the wind blew gustily.

"It is so stormy: need we go?"

"We must. The wind will fall at dark, and one does not mind rain in a close carriage. You wonder at me, I dare say, and so do I at myself; but I think I'm waking up, and growing young again. Now I shall be old Yorke and read studiously for an hour."

He laughed as he spoke, and laid himself on the couch, book in hand. But he read little, for Cecil's unusual restlessness distracted his attention, and he had fallen into a way of observing her lately, while she worked or studied, and he sat idle. She, too, opened a book, but soon put it down; she made a sketch, but seemed ill pleased with it, and threw it in the fire; she worked half a flower at her embroidery frame, turned over two or three portfolios with a listless air, then began to wander up and down the room so noiselessly that it would not have disturbed him had he been as absorbed as he seemed. Watching her covertly, he saw her steps grow rapid, her eyes wistful, her whole face and figure betray

impatience and an intense desire for something beyond her reach. Several times she seemed about to follow an almost uncontrollable impulse, but checked herself on the way to the door, and resumed her restless march, pausing with each turn to look out into the storm.

"What is it, Cecil? You want something. Can I get it for you?" he said, at last, unable to restrain the question.

"I do want something, but you cannot get it for me," she answered, pausing with an expression of mingled doubt and desire infinitely more becoming than her usual immobility.

"Come here and tell me what it is; you so seldom ask anything of me I am curious to know what this may be."

Drawing her down upon the couch where he still lay, he waited for her request with an amused smile, expecting some girlish demand. But she delayed so long that he turned her face to his, saying, as he studied its new aspect, —

"Is it to stay at home tonight, little girl?"

"No: it is to go out now, and alone."

"Alone, and in this raging storm? You are crazy, child."

"I like the storm, I'm tired of the house. Please let me go for just half an hour."

"Why do you wish to go alone? and where are you so eager to go?"

"I cannot tell you. Be kind and don't ask me, Yorke."

"A secret from me! That's something new. When shall I know it?"

"Never, if I can help it."

He lay looking at her with a curious feeling of wonder and admiration, for this sudden earnestness made her very charming, and he found it extremely pleasant to wile away an idle hour discovering the cause of this new waywardness in Cecil.

"I think you will tell me like an obedient little wife, and ask me prettily to go with or for you."

"I cannot tell you, and you must not come with me. Dear Yorke, let me go, please let me go!"

She folded her hands, dropped on her knees before him, and pleaded so earnestly with voice, and eyes, and outstretched hands, that he sat up amazed.

"What does it mean, Cecil? You have no right to keep a secret from me, and I cannot let you go out in such a storm on



such a mysterious errand as this. A month ago you promised to obey me. Will you rebel so soon, and risk your health if nothing else by this strange freak?"

There was a sudden kindling of the eye as she rose and turned away with a resolute, white face, saying, in a tone that startled him, —

"I have the same right to my secret as you have to yours, and I shall keep it as carefully. A month ago I did promise to love, honor, and obey; but the promises meant nothing, and your will is not my law, because, though my husband before the world, you are only my guardian here. I harm no one but myself in doing this, and I must go."

"Will you go if I forbid it?" he asked, rising in real perplexity and astonishment.

"Yes," she answered steadily.

"How if I follow you?"

"I shall do something desperate, I'm afraid."

She looked as if she might, and he dared not insist. Entreaties and commands had failed; perhaps submission might succeed, and he tried it.

"Go, then; I shall not follow. I trust you in this, as you have trusted me more than once, and hope you will be as worthy of confidence as I try to be."

He thought he had conquered, for, as he spoke, gravely yet kindly, she covered up her face as if subdued, and, *expecting a few tears*, an explanation and penitence, he stood waiting and recalling scenes of childish waywardness which had always ended so. No, not so; for to his unspeakable surprise Cecil left the room without a word. Five minutes later the hall-door closed, and he saw her fighting her way against wind and rain with the same intense longing, the same fixed resolution in her face.

For an hour he watched and waited, racking his brain to discover some clew to this mysterious outbreak. Several trifling events now returned to his memory, and deepened his perplexity. Just before they were married he brought her home a pretty bonbonniere to hold the *confits* for which she still had a childish fancy. Having filled it for her, he was about to drop it into one of the ornamental pockets of the little apron she wore, but as he touched it a paper rustled, and, as if the sound recalled some forgotten secret, she had clutched the pocket in a sudden panic, and begged him to stop. He had

accused her of having love-letters from Alfred hidden there, and she had indignantly denied it, but hurried away as if to put her secret under lock and key. Later she had ventured out alone once or twice, always asking pardon when reprovved for these short flights, but repeating them till strictly forbidden. Since then she had grown more taciturn than ever, and often went away to her own room to read or rest, she said. How she did spend the long hours passed there, Yorke was too proud to ask either mistress or maid, though he had felt much curiosity to know. The present mystery recalled these lesser ones, but gave no help in explaining anything, and he could only roam about the room and watch the storm more restlessly than Cecil.

Another hour passed, and he began to feel anxious, for twilight gathered fast, and still she did not come. A third hour rolled slowly by; the street lamps glimmered through the mist, but among the passing figures no familiar one appeared, and he was fast reaching that state of excitement which makes passive waiting impossible, when, as he stood peering out into the wild, wet night, a slight rustle was heard behind him, and a soft voice broke the long silence.

"I am ready, Yorke."

Turning with a start, he saw that all his fears had been in vain; for no storm-beaten figure stood before him, but Cecil shining in festival array.

"Thank heaven you are safe! I've been watching for you, but I did not see you come," he said, eying her with renewed wonder.

"No, I took care that you should not, and have been busy for an hour making myself pretty, as you bade me. Are you satisfied?"

He would have been hard to please if he was not satisfied with the fair apparition standing in the light of the newly kindled chandelier. A rosy cloud seemed to envelop her, bridal pearls gathered up the dark hair, shone on graceful neck and arms, and glimmered here and there among the soft-hued drapery. A plummy fan stirred in her hand, and a white-down-trimmed cloak half covered shoulders almost as fair, for Yorke adorned his living statue with a prodigal hand. He could not but smile delightedly, and forgive her, though she asked no pardon, for he was too glad to have her

back to utter or even think of questions or reproaches.

"I am more than satisfied. Now come and let me play hostess among the teapots, for you are too splendid for anything but to be looked at, and you must need refreshment after your wild walk."

"No, I want nothing; let Hester fill my place. I'll wait for you here, and enjoy the pleasant fire that you have made for me."

She knelt down before it, and he went slowly away, looking backward at the pretty picture the firelight showed him. When he rejoined her after tea and toilet, she was lying in a deep chair looking straight before her with a singular expression, dreamy, yet intense, blissfully calm, yet full of a mysterious brightness that made her face strangely beautiful. He examined her keenly, but she did not see him; he spoke, but she did not hear him; and not until he touched her did she seem conscious of his presence. Then the rapt look passed away, and she roused herself with an effort.

But Yorke could not forget it, and later in the evening, when Coventry's rooms were full of friends and strangers, he stepped aside into a corner to observe Cecil from a distance, and receive the compliments that now were so welcome to him. Two gentlemen paused near by, and, unconscious who was overhearing them, spoke freely of his ward.

"Where is Yorke's statue, as they call her? A dozen people are waiting for my opinion, and I must not disappoint them," said the elder of the two, with the air of an experienced connoisseur.

"She is sitting yonder. Do you see her, Dent? The dark-haired angel with the splendid eyes," returned the younger, speaking with artistic enthusiasm.

Dent took a survey, and Yorke waited for his opinion, feeling sure that it would be one of entire and flattering approval.

"As a work of art she is exquisite, but as a woman she is a dead failure. Why in heaven's name did n't Yorke marry one of his marble goddesses and done with it?"

"They say he has," laughed Ascot as Dent put down his glass with a shake of the head. "He fell in love with her beauty, and is as proud of it as if he had carved the fine curves of her figure, and cut the clear outline of her face. If it were not for color and costume, she might be mounted on a

pedestal as a mate for that serenely classical Pallas just behind her."

"Now to my eye," said Dent, "that rosy, sweet-faced little woman sitting near her is far lovelier than this expressionless, heartless-looking beauty. See how young Mrs. Vivian kindles and glows with every passing emotion; look at her smile, hear her laugh, see her meet her husband's eye with a world of love in her own, and then contrast her with your statuesque Mrs. Yorke."

"Every man to his taste. I admire the sculptor's, but I don't envy him his handsome wife unless he possesses the art of warming and waking his Galatea. I doubt it, however, for he has n't the look of a Pygmalion, though a very personable man. Come and introduce me to charming Mrs. Vivian; I've looked at the snow image till I'm positively chilled."

They passed on, and Yorke sent a glance after them that might have hastened their going had they met it. He had heard nothing but praise before, and this was quite a revelation to him. He was hurt and angry, yet ashamed of being so, and, drawing back to his corner, began to contrast Cecil with her neighbor. The gentlemen were right; that indefinable something which she had once possessed was gone now, and her beauty had lost its magic. The woman near her was all they had said, young, blooming, blithe and tender, with her new happiness shining in her face, and making her far more winsome than her fairer neighbor. He watched her look up at her husband with her heart in her eyes, and felt a sense of wrong because he had never met a glance like that in the dark eyes he knew so well. He saw the young pair dance together, and as they floated by, forgetful of everything but one another, he sighed involuntarily, remembering that he had done with love. He looked long at Cecil, and began to wonder if he did possess the power to animate his statue. For the first time he forgot his purpose, and yielding to the impulse of the moment, crossed the room, bent over her, and asked, —

"Cecil, can you waltz?"

"Yes: poor Alf taught me."

The tone in which the name was uttered roused the old jealous feeling, for she never spoke his name in that softened voice.

"Come, then, and waltz with me," he said, with a masterful air as novel as the request.

"With you? I thought you never danced."

"I will show you that I do. Lean on my arm, and let me see if I can bring some color into those white cheeks of yours."

She glanced up at him with a curious smile, for he looked both melancholy and excited; the next minute she forgot his face to wonder at his skill, for with a strong arm and steady foot he bore her round and round with a delightful sense of ease and motion as the music rose and fell, and their flying feet kept time. Yorke often looked down to mark the effect of this on Cecil, and was satisfied, for soon she glowed with the soft excitement of exercise and pleasure, the mysterious brightness returned to her eyes again and shone upon her face. Once he paused purposely before Dent and Ascot, and as he waited as if to catch the time, he heard the young man whisper to his companion, —

"Look at her now, and own that she is beautiful."

"That she is, for this is nature and not art. The man can animate his statue, and I envy him," returned the other, drawing nearer to watch the brilliant creature swaying on her husband's arm as Yorke swept her away wearing an expression that caused more than one friend to smile and rejoice.

"Rest a little, then we will dance again," he said, when he seated her, and leaning on her chair began to ply the fan, still bent on trying his power, for the test interested him.

"Do you see Mrs. Vivian yonder, Cecil? Tell me what you think of her."

"I think she is very pretty, and that her husband loves her very much."

"Don't you envy her?"

"No."

"Now that you have seen something of the world, and tasted many of its pleasures, do you never regret that you tied yourself to me so young, never reproach me for asking you to do it?" He leaned nearer as he spoke, and looked deep into her eyes; they looked back at him as if they read his heart, and something in their lustrous depths stirred him strangely; but he saw no love there, and she answered in that undemonstrative voice of hers, —

"I am contented, Yorke."

"Call me Basil; I am tired of the other, and it is too ugly for your lips."

She smiled to herself, remembering a

time when Basil was forbidden, and asked a question in her turn.

"Who are the gentlemen just passing?"

"Dent and Ascot, artists, I believe. Why do you ask?"

"I thought they were friends of yours, they seem to take so much interest in us."

"They are no friends of mine. Shall I tell you what they say of us?"

"Yes, Basil, if you like."

He did not answer for a moment, because the long-unused name came very sweetly from her lips, and he paused to enjoy it. Then he told her; but she only smoothed the ruffled plumage of the fan he had been using, and looked about her undisturbed.

"Mrs. Vivian tries to please her husband by being fond and gay; I try to please mine by being calm and cool. If both are satisfied, why care for what people say?"

"But I do care, and it displeases me to have you criticized in that way. Be what you like at home, but in public try to look as if you cared for me a little, because I will not have it said that I married you for your beauty alone."

"Shall I imitate Mrs. Vivian? You are hard to please, but I can try."

He laughed a sudden and irrepressible laugh, partly at her suggestion, partly at his own request, and she smiled for sympathy, so blithe and pleasant was the sound.

"What a capricious fool I am becoming!" he said. "I no longer know myself, and shall begin to think my gray hairs have come too soon if this goes on. Am I very old and grave, Cecil?"

"Eight-and-thirty is not old, Basil, and if you always dressed as carefully as tonight, and looked as happy, no one would call you my old husband, as a lady did just now."

Yorke glanced at a mirror opposite, and fancied she was right; then his face clouded over, and he shook his head as if reproaching himself for a young man's folly. But the reflection he saw was that of a stately looking man, with fine eyes and a thoughtful countenance which just then wore a smile that made it singularly attractive. Here their host was seen approaching with the strangers, and Yorke whispered suddenly, —

"Imitate Mrs. Vivian if you can; I want to try the effect upon these gentlemen."

She bowed and held the fan above her eyes a moment, as if to screen them from the light. When it dropped, as the new-

condemners were presented, they saw a blooming, blushing face, with smiles on the lips, light in the eyes, and happiness in every tone of the youthful voice. Amazed at the rapidity of the change, yet touched by her obedience and charmed with her address, her husband could only look and listen for the first few minutes, wondering what spirit possessed the girl. So well did she act her part that he soon entered heartily into his own, and taking young Vivian for his model, played the devoted husband so successfully that Dent and Ascot lingered long, and went away at last to report that Mrs. Yorke was the most charming woman in the room, and the sculptor the happiest man.

"Was my imitation a good one? Is that what you wish me to be in public?" asked Cecil, dropping back into her accustomed manner the instant they were alone, though her face still wore its newly acquired charm.

"It was done to the life, and you quite took my breath away with your 'loves' and 'dears,' and all manner of small fascinations. Where did you learn them? What possesses you tonight, Cecil?"

"An evil spirit. I have called it up, and now I cannot lay it."

She laid her hands against her cheeks where a color like the deep heart of a rose burned steadily, while her eyes glittered and the flowers on her bosom trembled with the rapid beating of her heart, and some inward excitement seemed to kindle her into a life and loveliness that startled Yorke and half frightened herself. She saw that her words bewildered him still more than her actions, and, as if anxious to make him forget both, she rose, saying with an imperious little gesture, —

"We have sat apart in this nook too long; it is ill bred. Come and dance with me."

He obeyed as if they had changed places, and for an hour Cecil danced like a devotee, delighting and surprising those about by the gayety and grace with which she bore her part in the brilliant scene. When not with her, Yorke lingered near by, longing to take her home, for her spirits seemed unnatural to him, and a half-painful, half-pleasurable sentiment of tender anxiety replaced his former pride in her. She had blossomed so suddenly he scarcely knew his quiet pupil, and while her secret perplexed

him, this new change both charmed and troubled him, and kept him hovering about her till she came to him flushed and breathless, saying in the same excited manner as before, —

"Take me home, Bazil, or I shall dance myself to death. I want to be quiet now, for my head aches and burns, and I'm so tired I shall fall asleep before I know it."

Making their adieux he took her to a quiet anteroom, and left her to rest while he went to find his carriage. He was absent many minutes, being detained by the way, and when he returned it was to find Cecil fast asleep. Her fan and gloves had fallen from her hands, and she lay with her disordered hair scattered on the pillow, her white arms folded under her head, looking as if an unconquerable drowsiness had overpowered her. Wrapping her in her cloak, Yorke took her away half awake, let her sleep undisturbed on his shoulder during the drive, and reluctantly gave her into the hands of her maid when they reached home.

Very little sleep did he get that night, for Cecil's figure was continually dancing before his eyes, sometimes as he first saw it that evening in the firelight, then as it looked when she played Mrs. Vivian with such spirit; or when she answered with that strange expression, "An evil spirit; I have called it up, and now I cannot lay it." But oftenest as he watched it by the light of the street lamps, with a soft cheek against his own, and recollections of that other Cecil curiously blended with thoughts of the one sleeping on his shoulder. Calling himself a fool, with various adjectives attached, and resolutely fixing his mind on other things, having failed to bring repose, he lighted both lamp and meerschaum and read till dawn. His first question when he met Victorine in the morning was, —

"How is Mrs. Yorke?"

"Still asleep, sir, and I have n't called her, for the only thing she said last night was to bid me let her rest all day unless she woke."

"Very well, let her be quiet, and tell me when she rises."

He went to his studio, but could settle to nothing, and found the day wearisomely long, for Cecil did not rise. He asked for her at dinner, but she was still asleep, and hoping for a long evening with her, he resigned himself to a solitary afternoon. The

clock was on the stroke of six when Victorine came in, looking frightened.

"I think Mrs. Yorke is ill, sir."

"Is she awake?" he asked, starting up.

"I've tried to wake her, but I can't. Perhaps you could, sir, for something must be amiss, she looks so strangely and has not stirred since morning."

Before the last sentence was out of her mouth Yorke was half way up-stairs, and in another minute at Cecil's bedside. A great change had come over her since he saw her last, a change that alarmed him terribly. The restless sleep had deepened into a deathlike immobility; the feverish flush was gone, and violet shadows gave her closed eyes a sunken look; through her pale lips slow breaths came and went, and when he felt her pulse her hand dropped heavily as he relinquished it. Stooping, he whispered gently yet urgently, —

"Cecil, wake up: it is time."

But there was no sign of waking, and nothing stirred but the faint flutter of her breath. He raised her, brushed the damp hair from her forehead, and cried in a voice tremulous with fear, —

"My darling, speak to me!"

But she lay mute and motionless. With a desperate sort of energy he flung up the window, rolled the bed where a fresh wind blew in, laid her high on the pillows, bathed her head and face, held pungent salts to her nostrils and chafed her hands. Still all in vain; not a sound or motion answered him, and all his appeals, now tender, now commanding, could not break the trance that held her. Desisting suddenly from his fruitless efforts, he sent Victorine for a physician, and till he came suffered the most terrible suspense. Before Dr. Home could open his lips Yorke explained hurriedly, and bade him do something for heaven's sake.

The old gentleman took a long survey, touched pulse and temples, listened to her breathing, and then asked, though his own medicine-case was in his hand, —

"Do you keep laudanum in the house?"

"I have some that I've had a long time. I'll get it for you." And Yorke was gone in spite of Victorine's offer of assistance. But he returned with a fresh anxiety, for the little flask was empty.

"It was half full two days ago; no one goes to that cabinet but myself. I don't understand it," he began.

"I do." And there was something in the doctor's tone that caused the bottle to drop from Yorke's hand as he whispered, with a look of incredulity and dismay, —

"Do you think she has taken it?"

"I have no doubt of it."

Yorke seized the old man's arm with a painful grip, asking in a terror-stricken tone, —

"Do you mean she tried to destroy herself?"

"Nothing of the sort; she has only taken an overdose, and must sleep it off."

"Doctor, you deceive me! I know enough of this perilous stuff to know that the bottle under my feet contained enough to kill a man."

"Perhaps so, but not your wife; and the fact that she is still alive proves that I am right."

Terror changed to intense relief as Yorke asked with an appealing gesture, —

"Can you do nothing for her? Will she not sleep herself to death?"

"I assure you there is no danger; she will wake in a few hours, weak and languid, but all the better for the lesson she has unintentionally given herself. It's a dangerous habit, and I advise you to put a stop to it."

"To what? I don't understand you, sir."

The doctor looked up from the powder he was preparing, saw Yorke's perplexity, and answered with a significant nod, —

"I see you don't, but you shall, for she is too young for such things yet. Your wife eats opium, I suspect."

For a moment Yorke stared at him blankly, then said impetuously, —

"I'll not believe it!"

"Ask the maid," returned the doctor, but Victorine spoke for herself.

"Upon my word, sir, I know nothing of it. Mrs. Yorke sleeps a deal some days and is very quiet, but I never saw her take anything but the little comfits."

"Hum! she is more careful than I suspected. I'm sure of it, however, and perhaps you can satisfy yourself if you choose to look."

The doctor cast a suggestive glance about the room. Yorke understood it, and taking Cecil's keys began his search, saying sternly, "I have a right to satisfy myself and save her from further danger if it is so."

He did not look long, for in a corner of the drawer where certain treasures were kept he found a paper which had evidently been a wrapper for something that left a faintly acrid odor behind. A few grayish crumbs were shaken from the folds, and Doctor Home tasted them with the satisfied remark, —

“I thought so.”

Yorke crushed the paper in his hand, asking in a tone of mingled pain and perplexity, —

“Why should she do it?”

“A whim, perhaps, ennui, wakefulness; a woman’s reasons for such freaks are many. You must ask her and put a stop to it, though I think this may break up the habit.”

“What led you to suspect her of it?” asked Yorke, trying to find his way out of the mystery.

“I detected laudanum in her breath; that explained the unnatural sleep. The fact that it had not already killed her assured me that she was used to it, for, as you said, a dose like that would kill a man, but not a woman who had been taking opium for months. I can do nothing now; keep the room cool, let her wake naturally, then give her this, and if she is not comfortable tomorrow, let me know.”

With that the doctor left him, Victorine began her watch beside the pale sleeper, and Yorke went away to wander through the silent house haunted by thoughts that would not let him rest.

## A MARBLE WOMAN.

BY A. M. BARNARD, AUTHOR OF "V. V., OR PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS."

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### CHAPTER VII.

#### HEART FOR HEART.

Doctor Home was right; Cecil's heavy sleep gradually passed into a natural one, and in the morning she woke, wan and nerveless, but entirely ignorant that she had lost a day. A misty recollection of some past excitement remained, but brought no explanation of her present lassitude, except a suspicion that she had taken more opium than was prudent. Finding herself alone when she woke, she did not ring for Victorine, but made her toilet hastily, rubbed a transient color into her pale cheeks, drew her hair low on her temples to conceal her heavy eyes, and went down, fearing it was very late.

Yorke sat in his place with a newspaper in his hand; but he was not reading, and there was something in his face that made Cecil pause involuntarily to examine it. It seemed as if years had been added to his age since she saw him last; his mouth was grave, his eye sad; a weary yet resolute expression was visible, but also the traces of some past suffering that touched the girl, and caused her to lay her hand upon his shoulder, saying in her gentlest tone, —

"Good-morning, Basil; forgive me for being so willful yesterday. I am punished for my fault by finding you so grave and tired now."

"I am only tired of waiting for my breakfast," was all the answer she got; but she felt him start and saw the paper rustle in his hand as she spoke, though whether surprise or displeasure caused these demonstrations, she could not tell, and fancying him in one of his moody fits, took her place in silence. His coffee stood untouched till it was cold before he looked up and said, with a keen glance which made her eyes falter and fall, —

"Are you quite rested, Cecil?"

"Not quite; I danced too much last night."

"The night before last, you mean."

"We were at Coventry's last evening, Basil."

"No, on Monday evening."

"Yes, and today is Tuesday."

He turned the paper toward her, and Wednesday stared her full in the face. She looked incredulous, then bewildered, and putting her hand to her forehead seemed trying to recollect, while a foreboding fear came over her.

"Then what became of yesterday? I remember nothing of it," she asked, with a troubled look.

"You slept it away."

"What! all day?"

"For six-and-thirty hours, without a word, almost without a motion."

His eye was still upon her, his voice was ominously quiet, and as he spoke her wandering glance fell on an open book that lay beside him. She read its title, "Confessions of an Opium Eater," and overcome by a painful blending of shame and fear, she covered up her face without a word.

"Is it true, Cecil?"

"Yes, Basil."

"How long has it been?"

"A year."

"What tempted you to try such a dangerous cure, or pleasure?"

"Yourself."

"I! How? When?"

"You gave me laudanum when I could not sleep. I liked its influence, and after that I tried it whenever I was sad or tired."

"Was this the secret I nearly discovered once, the cause of your solitary walks, the evil spirit that possessed you at Coventry's?"

"Yes; I had opium in my pocket that

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day, and was so frightened when I thought you would discover it, because I knew you would be angry. I went out those times to get it, for I dared not trust any one. Last night — no, Monday night — I had none, and I longed for it so intensely I could not wait. I disobeyed you, but the storm was too much for me, and I was just turning back in despair, when I remembered the little flask. You seldom go to the cabinet, never use the laudanum, and I thought I could replace it by and by."

"But, child, had you no fear of the consequences when playing such perilous pranks with yourself? You might have killed yourself, as you came near doing just now."

"I was used to it because mamma often had it, and at first I was very careful; but the habit grew upon me unconsciously, and became so fascinating I could not resist it. In my hurry I took too much, and was frightened afterward, for everything seemed strange. I don't know what I did, but nothing seemed impossible to me, and it was a splendid hour; I wish it had been my last."

Tears fell between her fingers, and for a moment she was shaken by some uncontrollable emotion. Yorke half rose as if to go to her, but checked the impulse and sat down again with the air of a man bent on subduing himself at any cost. Cecil was herself again almost immediately, and, wiping away her tears, seemed to await his reproof with her accustomed meekness. But none came, for very gently he said,—

"Was this kind to yourself or me?"

"No; forgive me, Bazil. I will amend my fault."

"And promise never to repeat it?"

"I promise, but you cannot know how hard a thing it is to give up when I need it so much."

"Why, Cecil?"

"Because"—she stopped a moment as if to restrain some impetuous word, and added, in an altered tone, "because I find it hard to tame myself to the quiet, lonely life you wish to lead. I am so young, so full of foolish hopes and fancies, that it will take time to change me entirely, and what I have seen of the world lately makes it still more difficult. Have patience with me, and I shall be wiser and more contented soon."

He had left the table as if to throw up a

window, and lingered for a moment to enjoy the balmy air, perhaps to conceal or conquer some pang of self-reproach, some late regret for what he had done. When he returned, it was to say, with an undertone of satisfaction in his grave voice, —

"Yes, it is too soon to ask so much of you, and if you give up this dangerous comforter, surely I can give up a little of the seclusion that I love. It is hard to break off such a habit. I will help you, and for a time we will forget these troubles in new scenes and employments. Will you go to the sea-shore for a month, Cecil, and so make home pleasanter by absence?"

"Oh, so gladly! I love the sea, and it will do me good. You are very kind to think of it, and I thank you so much, Bazil!"

"She did thank him with eyes as well as lips, for her face brightened like a prisoner's when the key turns in the lock and sunshine streams into his cell. Yorke saw the joy, heard the tone of gratitude, and stifled a sigh, for they showed him what a captive he had made of her, and betrayed how much she had suffered silently.

"Shall I go with you?" he asked in a curiously unauthoritative tone, but with a longing look that might have changed her reply had she seen it.

"If you care to, I shall feel safer; but do not unless it is pleasant to you."

"It is pleasant. We will go tomorrow," he said decidedly. "Rest and prepare to-day; take Victorine with you, and leave your troubles all behind, and in a month we will come back our happy selves again."

"I hope so," was all her answer.

And the change was settled without more words.

"The charm does not work," sighed Yorke within himself, as he looked down at Cecil leaning on his arm, while they went pacing along the smooth beach, seven days later, with the great waves rolling up before them, a fresh wind blowing inward from the sea, and summer sunshine brooding over the green islands of the bay. The week had brought no change to Cecil; air and bathing, exercise and change of scene, thoughtful care and daily devotion on her husband's part, all seemed to have failed, and she walked beside him with the old quietude and coldness intensified instead of lightened.



"What shall I do with you, Cecil? You don't get strong and rosy as I hoped you would, and you often have a longing look as if you wanted your opium again; but you know I dare not give it to you."

"I shall learn to do without it in time, or find something else to take its place. Hark!"

As the words left her lips, her hand arrested him, her eyes kindled, a smile broke over her face, and her whole figure seemed to start into life. He stood still, wondering, but instantly he learned what magic had wrought the spell, for on the wings of the wind came the fitful music of a song from a solitary boatman whose skiff lay rocking far out in the bay. Both recognized the voice, both watched the white sail gliding nearer, and both faces altered rapidly; Cecil's warmed and brightened as she listened with head erect and detaining hand, but Yorke's darkened with the blackest frown it had ever worn as he drew her away with an impatient gesture and peremptory —

"Come in; it is too warm to linger here for a fisherman's song!"

The smile broke into a laugh as she said, following with evident reluctance, —

"Do fishermen sing in Italian, and go fishing in costumes like that?"

"Your ears and eyes must be better than mine if you can discover what I neither hear nor see," he answered almost petulantly. But still smiling she looked backward as she began to sing like a soft echo of the stranger voice, and let him lead her where he would. Till sunset he kept her in their rooms, busy with pencil, book or needle, blind to the wistful glances that she often sent seaward, and deaf to the hints that they were losing the hours best suited for sketching. Victorine came in at last, bringing Cecil's hat and mantle, and, as if the nod she gave him was a preconcerted signal, Yorke rose at once, saying promptly, —

"Yes, now we can go without fear of sun or" —

"Fishermen," added Cecil, with a slight scornful smile.

"Exactly." And Yorke put on her mantle without a sign of displeasure at her interruption. She seemed on the point of refusing the stroll that now had no charm for her, but yielded, and they went out together, leaving Victorine to lift her hands and wonder afresh at the strange behaviour of her master and mistress.

"I have a fancy to walk upon the rocks; can I, Basil?" were the first words Cecil uttered, as they came into the splendor of the evening hour that bathed the sea and sky within its ruddy glow.

A single sail was skimming down the bay, and not a figure sat or stood among the rocks. Yorke saw this, and answered with a gracious smile, —

"Walk where you will; I leave the path to you."

She climbed the cliffs and sat watching the lonely boat until it vanished round the rocky point where the light-house tower showed its newly kindled spark. Then she turned and said wearily, —

"Let us go home. I find it chilly here."

He led her down another path than that by which they came, but stopped suddenly, and she felt his hand tighten its hold as he exclaimed, —

"Go back! it is not safe. Go, I beg of you!"

It was too late, for she had seen a figure lying on a smooth ledge of the cliff, had recognized it and glided on with a willful look, a smile of satisfaction. He set his teeth, and sprang after her; but neither spoke, for Germain was asleep, and the entire repose of his fine face not only restrained their tongues, but riveted their beauty-loving eyes. Cecil was touched to see how changed he was: for all the red glow shining over him, his face was very pale; the wind blew back the hair from his temples, showing how hollow they had grown, and, stooping to brush an insect from his forehead, she saw many gray hairs among the dark locks scattered on the stone. His mouth was half hidden by the black beard, but the lips smiled as if some happy dream haunted his sleep, and in the hands folded on his broad chest she saw a little knot of ribbon that had dropped from her dress that morning as she listened to his song.

Yorke saw it also, and made an involuntary gesture to pluck it from the sleeper's hold, but Cecil caught his arm, whispering sharply, —

"Let him keep it! You care nothing for it, and he needs something to comfort him if I read his face aright."

Yorke stood motionless an instant, then seemed to take some sudden resolution, for, drawing her gently aside, he said with a mildness that was as new as winning, —

"You are right; he does need comfort."

and he shall have it." Go on alone, Cecil; I will follow soon."

She obeyed him, but glancing backward as she went, she saw him turn his face to the cliff behind him, and lay his head down on his arm in an attitude of deep dejection or of doubt. He stood so till the last sound of her light step died away, then he stooped and touched the sleeper, with a low-spoken —

"August, it is I!"

Germain leaped to his feet as if the slight touch had been a blow, the quiet call a pistol-shot, and his hand went to his breast with an instinctive motion that half revealed a hidden weapon. A single glance seemed to re-assure him, for, though his heart beat audibly, and his very lips were white, he laughed and offered the hand that had just been ready to deal death to some imaginary captor. Yorke did not take it, and, as if the discourtesy reminded him of something, Germain drew back, bowed with the grace that was habitual to him, and said coolly, —

"Pardon me; your sudden waking makes me forgetful. I was dreaming of you, and in the dream we were friends as of old."

"Never again, August; it is impossible. But I will do my best for you now, as before, if I may trust you."

"Have I not kept my word this time? Have I not left you in peace for nearly a year? Did I not obey you today when you bade me shun you, though the merest accident betrayed your presence to me?"

"You have done well for one so tempted and so impetuous; but you forget the letters written to Cecil in my absence, and lying down to sleep in our very path is not putting the bay between us as I commanded you."

"Forgive the letters; they did no harm, for she never read them, I suspect. Ah, you smile! Then I am right. As for finding me here, it was no plot of mine. I thought you always walked on the beach, so I crept up to catch one glimpse of her unseen, before I went away for another year, perhaps. Be generous, Basil. You have made her all your own; do not deny me this poor boon."

"I will not. Promise me to keep our secret sacredly, and you shall see her when you will. But you must control yourself, eye, tongue, voice and manner, else I must banish you again. Remember, your life is

in my hands, and I will give you up rather than let harm come to her."

"I swear it, Basil. You may safely indulge me now, for I shall not haunt you long; my wanderings are almost over, and you may hear Death knocking at my heart."

Real solicitude appeared in Yorke's face as the other spoke with a melancholy smile, and, obeying a kindly impulse, he laid his hand on Germain's shoulder.

"I hope not, for it is a very tender heart, in spite of all its waywardness and past offences. But if it be so, you shall not be denied the one happiness that I can give you. Come home with me, and for an hour sun yourself in Cecil's presence. I do not fear you in this mood, and there is no danger of disturbing her; I wish there was!"

"God bless you, Basil! Trust me freely. The wild devil is cast out, and all I ask is a quiet time in which to repent before I die. Take me to her; I will not mar her peace nor yours. May I keep this? It is my only relic."

He showed the ribbon with a beseeching look, and, remembering Cecil's words, Yorke bowed a mute assent as he led the way down the rude path and along the beach where slender footprints were still visible in the damp sand.

She was waiting in the softly lighted room, with no sign of impatience as she sat singing at the instrument. It was the air Germain had sung, and, pausing behind her, he blended the music of his voice with hers in the last strains of the song. She turned then, and put out her hand, but caught it back and glanced at Yorke, for the recollection of the struggle in the dark returned to check the impulse that prompted her to welcome this man whom she could not dislike, in spite of mystery, violence, and unmistakable traces of a turbulent life. York saw her doubt, and answered it instantly.

"Give him your hand, Cecil, and forgive the past; there is no ill will between us now, and he will not forget himself again."

Germain bowed low over the little hand, saying, in the tone that always won its way, —

"Rest assured of that, Mrs. Yorke, and permit me to offer my best wishes, now that my prophecy has been fulfilled."

In half an hour Yorke saw the desired change, for Germain worked the miracle,

and Cecil began to look as she had done a year ago. Sitting a little apart, he watched them intently, as if longing to learn the secret, for he had failed to animate his statue since the night when for a time he believed he had some power over her, but soon learned that it was to opium, not to love, that he owed his brief success. Cecil paid no heed to him, but seemed forgetful of his presence, as Germain entertained her with an animation that increased the fascination of his manner. An irresistible mingling of interest, curiosity, and compassion attracted her to him. Yorke's assurance, as well as his own altered demeanor, soon removed all misgivings from her mind, and the indescribable charm of his presence made the interview delightful, for he was both gay and gentle, devoted and respectful. The moment the hour struck, he rose and went, with a grateful glance at Yorke, a regretful one at Cecil. She did not ask now as before, "Will he come again?" but her eyes looked the question.

"Yes, he will come tomorrow, if you like. He is ill and lonely, and not long for this world; so do your best for him while you may."

"I will, with all my heart, for indeed I pity him. It is very generous of you to forget his wrong doing, and give me this pleasure."

"Then come and thank me for it *a la Mrs. Vivian*." He spoke impulsively, and held his hands to her, but she drew back, swept him a stately little courtesy, and answered with her coolest air, —

"We are not in public now, so thank you, guardian, and good-night."

She smiled as she spoke, but he turned as if he had been struck, and, springing out of the low window, paced the sands until the young moon set.

They had come to the seaside before the season had begun, but now the great hotel was filling fast, and solitude was at an end. Cecil regretted this, and so did Yorke, for the admiration which she always excited no longer pleased but pained him, because pride had changed to a jealous longing to keep her to himself. In public she was the brilliant, winning wife; in private, the cold, quiet ward, and nothing but Germain's presence had power to warm her then. He came daily, seeming to grow calmer and better in the friendly atmosphere around him. Cecil enjoyed his society with una-

bated pleasure, and Yorke left them free, often being absent for hours and apparently intent upon some purpose of his own. Of course there were many eyes to watch, many tongues to comment upon the actions of the peculiar sculptor and his lovely wife. Germain was known to be a friend; it was evident that he was an invalid, and no longer young, but flirting young ladies and gossiping old ones would make romances, while the idle gentlemen listened and looked on. Cecil soon felt that something was amiss, for though her secluded life had made her singularly childlike in some things, she was fast learning to know herself, and understand her relations to the world. She wondered if Yorke heard what was said, and hoped he would speak if anything displeased him; but till he did, she went on her way as if untroubled, walking, sailing, singing, and driving with Germain, who never forgot his promise, and who daily won her fresh confidence and regard. So the days passed till the month was gone, and with a heavy heart Cecil heard her husband give orders to prepare for home.

"Are you ready?" he asked, coming in as she stood recalling the pleasant hours spent with Germain, and wondering if he would come to say farewell.

"Yes, Basil, I am ready."

"But not glad to go?"

"No, for I have been very happy here."

"And home is not made pleasanter by absence?"

"I shall try to think it is pleasanter."

"And I shall try to make it so. Here is the carriage. Shall we go?"

As they rolled away, Cecil looked back, half expecting to see some signal of adieu from window, cliff, or shore; but there was none, and Yorke said, interpreting the look aright, —

"It is in vain to look for him; he has already gone."

"It is much better so. I am glad of it," she said decidedly, as she drew down her veil, and leaning back, seemed to decline all further conversation. Her companion consoled himself with Judas, but something evidently filled him with a pleasant excitement, for often he smiled unconsciously, and several times sang softly to himself, as if well pleased at some fancy of his own. Cecil thought her disappointment amused him, and, much offended, sat with her eyes closed behind her veil, careless of all around

her, till the sudden stopping of the carriage roused her, and, looking up, she saw Yorke waiting to hand her out.

"Why stop here? This is not home," she said, looking at the lovely scene about with wondering eyes.

"Yes, this is home," he answered, as, leading her between blooming parterres and up the wide steps, he brought her to a place so beautiful that she stood like one bewildered. A long, lofty hall, slightly lighted by the sunshine that crept in through screens of flowers and vines. A carpet, green and thick as forest moss, lay under foot; warm-hued pictures leaned from the walls, and all about, in graceful alcoves, stood Yorke's fairest statues, like fit inhabitants of this artist's home. Before three windows airy draperies swayed in the wind, showing glimpses of a balcony that overhung the sea whose ever-varying loveliness was a perpetual joy, and on this balcony a man sat, singing.

"Does it please you, Cecil? I have done my best to make home more attractive by bringing to it all that you most love."

Yorke spoke with repressed eagerness, for his heart was full, and, try as he might, he could not quite conceal it. Cecil saw this, and a little tremor of delight went through her; but she only took his hand in both her own, exclaiming gratefully, —

"It is too beautiful for me! How shall I thank you? This is the work you have been doing secretly, and this is why you sent Germain before us to give me a sweet welcome. How thoughtful and how beautiful it was of you."

He looked pleased, but not satisfied; and led her up and down, showing all the wonders of the little summer palace by the sea. Everywhere she found her tastes remembered, her comfort consulted, her least whim gratified, and sometimes felt as if she had found something dearer than all these. Still no words passed her lips warmer than gratitude, and when they returned to the hall of statues, she only pressed the generous hand that gave so much, and said, again, —

"It is too beautiful for me. How can I thank you for such kindness to your little ward?"

"Say wife, Cecil, and I am satisfied."

"Pardon me, I forgot that, and like the other best because it is truer. Now let me go and thank Germain."

She went on before him, and, coming out into the wide balcony, saw nothing for a moment but the scene before her. Below, the waves broke musically on the shore, the green islands slept in the sunshine, the bay was white with sails, the city spires glittered in the distance, and, beyond, the blue sea rolled to meet the far horizon.

"Has he not done well? Is it not a charming home to live and die in?" said Germain, as she turned to greet him, with both hands extended, and something more than gratitude in her face. That look, so confiding and affectionate, was too much for Germain; he took the hands and bent to give her a tenderer greeting, remembering his promise just in time, and, with a half-audible apology, hurried away, as if fearing to trust himself. Cecil looked after him sorrowfully, but when Yorke approached, asking in some surprise, "Where is Germain?" she answered reproachfully, —

"He is gone, and he must not come again."

"Why not?"

"Because he cannot forget, and others see it as well as I. You might have spared him this, and for my sake have remembered that it is not always wise to be kind."

"Ah, they gossip again, do they? Let them; I've done one rash and foolish thing to appease Mrs. Grundy, and now I shall trouble myself no further about her or her tongue."

Leaning on the balustrade, he did not look at her, though he held his breath to catch her reply, but seemed intent on watching leaf after leaf float downward to the sea. His careless tone, his negligent attitude, wounded Cecil as deeply as his words; her eyes kindled, and real resentment trembled in her voice.

"Who should care if not you? Do you know what is said of us?"

"Only what is said of every pretty woman at a watering-place." And he leaned over to watch the last leaf fall.

"You do not care then? It gives you no pain to have it said that I am happier with Germain than with you?"

He clenched the hand she could not see, but shrugged his shoulders and looked far off at sea, as if watching a distant sail.

"For once, rumor tells the truth, and why should I deny it? My pride may be a little hurt, but I'm not jealous of poor Germain."

If he had seen her hold her lips together with almost as grim a look as his own often wore, and heard her say within herself, "I will prove that," he would have carried his experiment no further. But he never turned his head, and Cecil asked, with a touch of contempt in her voice that made him wince,—

"Do you wish this mysterious friend of yours to go and come as freely as he has done of late?"

"Why not, if he is happy? He has not long to enjoy either life or love."

"And I am to receive him as before, am I?"

"As you please. If his society is agreeable to you, I have no desire to deprive you of it, since mine is burdensome and Alfred away."

Something in the emphasis unconsciously put upon the last name caused a smile to flit over Cecil's face, but it was gone instantly, and her voice was cold as ice.

"Thank you; and you have no fear of the consequences of this unparalleled generosity of yours?"

"None for myself or my snow image. Has she for herself?"

"I fear nothing for myself; I have no heart, you know."

She laughed a sudden laugh that made him start, and as she vanished behind the floating curtains, he struck his hand on the iron bar before him with a force that brought blood, saying, in an accent of despair.—

"And she will never know that I have one, till she has broken it!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MASKS.

"Cecil, the world begins to wonder why Mrs. Yorke does not admit it to a glimpse of her new home."

"Mrs. Yorke is supremely indifferent to the world's wonder or its wishes."

She certainly looked so, as she sat in the couch corner singing to herself, and playing with a useless fan,—for the room was breezy with sea airs, though an August sun blazed without. York was strolling from alcove to alcove, as if studying effects among his statues, and Germain lounged on the wide step of the balcony window, with a guitar across his knee, for he still came

daily, as neither master nor mistress had forbidden him.

"I think I have proved my indifference, but people annoy me with questions, and I suspect we shall have no peace till we give some some sort of an entertainment, and purchase freedom hereafter by the sacrifice of one evening now."

"You are right, Yorke; I, too, have been beset by curious inquirers, and I suggest that you end their suspense at once. Why not have a masquerade? These rooms are admirably fitted for it, there has been none this season, and the moon is at the full next week. What does 'my lady' say?"

Germain spoke in his persuasive voice, and Cecil looked interested now.

"If we must have anything let it be that. I like such things, and it is pleasant to forget one's self, sometimes. Does the fancy suit you, Bazil?"

"Anything you please, or nothing at all. I only spoke of it, thinking you might find some pleasure in pleasing others," he returned, still busy with the piping Faun, that had a place among the finer works of his own hands.

"I used to do so, and tried very hard to please, but no good came of it, so now I enjoy myself, and leave others to do likewise. What characters shall we assume, Germain?"

As she asked the question, her voice changed as abruptly as her manner, and languid indifference was replaced by lively interest.

"I shall assume none, I have not spirits enough for it, but, in a domino, can glide about and collect compliments for you. Your husband must take the brilliant part, as a host should."

"He had better personate Othello: the costume would be becoming, and the character an easy one for him to play, he is such a jealous soul."

She spoke ironically, and he answered in the same tone,—

"No, thank you, I prefer Hamlet, but you would succeed well as the princess in the fairy tale, who turned to stone whenever her husband approached her, though a very charming woman to all others. Perhaps however, you would prefer to personate some goddess; I can recommend Diana as a cool character for a sultry summer evening."

"I hate goddesses, having lived with them

all my life. Every one will expect me to be some classical creature or other, so I shall disappoint them, and enjoy myself like a mortal woman. I'll imitate the French marquis whom we saw last winter at the theatre; she was very charming, and the dress is easily prepared, if one has jewels enough."

Germain laughed, involuntarily, at the idea of Cecil in such a character, and she laughed also, a light-hearted laugh, pleasant to hear.

"You think I cannot do it? Wait and see. I am a better actress than you think for; I've had daily practice since I was married, and Basil will testify that I do my part well."

"So well, that sometimes it is impossible not to mistake art for nature. When shall this grand *fete* take place, Madame la Marquise?"

"Next week; four days are enough for preparation, and if we wait longer, I shall get tired of the fancy, and give it up."

"Next week it shall be then."

Yorke stood looking down the long room at the pretty tableau at the end, for Germain was leaning on the back of the couch now, dropping odorous English violets into the white hands lifted to catch them, and Cecil looked as if she was already enjoying herself as a mortal woman. Standing apart among the statues, he wondered if she remembered the time when his will was law, and it was herself who obeyed with a weakness he had not yet learned. Now this was changed, and he called himself a fool for losing his old power, yet gaining no new hold upon her. She ruled him, but seemed not to know it, and keeping her smiles for others, showed her darkest side to him, being as lovely and as thorny as any brier rose. Presently she sprang up, saying, with unusual animation, —

"I will go and consult with Victorine, and then we will drive to town and give our orders. You must come with me, Germain. I want your taste in my selection; Basil has none, except in stones."

"One cannot doubt that, with such proofs all about one," answered Germain, as he followed her toward the door. "When shall we have another statue, Yorke? You have been idle of late."

"Never busier in my life; I have a new design in my mind, but it takes time to work it out. Wait a few weeks longer, and

I will show you something that shall surpass all these."

"Unless you have lost your skill."

Yorke's face had kindled as he spoke, but it fell again when Cecil whispered those words in passing, with a glance that seemed to prophesy a failure for the new design, whatever it might be. A flush of passionate pain passed across his face, and he lifted his arm as if to hurl poor Psyche down again, but the sight of the bruised hand seemed to recall some purpose, and calm him by its spell.

For four days there was much driving to and fro between the city and the beach; the great hotel was all astir, and the villas along the shore were full of busy tongues and needles, for summer is the time for pleasure, and the Yorkes' masquerade was the event of the season. On the appointed evening, all things were propitious, the night was balmy, the sky cloudless, the moon lent her enchantment to the scene, and the lonely home beside the sea wore its most inviting aspect, for the hall of statues was brilliant with lights, blooming with flowers, and haunted by the fitful music of a hand concealed among the shrubbery without. Yorke, looking stately and sombre as the melancholy Dane, and Germain in a plain black silk domino, stood waiting for Cecil, mask in hand. Presently she came rustling down, in a costume both becoming and piquant, for the powdered hair made her fair skin dazzling, and the sweeping brocades of violet and silver set off her slender figure. She wore no ornaments, but a profusion of rich lace upon the dress, white plumes in her hair, and a cluster of roses on her bosom. With the costume, she seemed to have assumed the coquetry of the French marquise, and greeted her companions in broken English, spoken with a charming accent and sprightly grace that caused Germain to compliment her on her skill, and Yorke to survey her with undisguised pride, as he said, with a significant smile, —

"Let me put the last touch to this ravishing toilet of yours, and prove that you were right in saying I had some taste in stones."

Cecil bent her beautiful neck to let him clasp a diamond necklace about it, and held out a pair of lovely arms to receive their glittering fetters, with a little cry of pleasure, and a characteristic —

"*Merci, monsieur!* you are too gallant in

so revenging yourself upon me for my idle words. These are superb, I kiss your munificent hands;" and as he essayed to fasten in the brooch, she touched his hand with her lips. The pin dropped, Germain took it up, and turning to him, she said, in her own voice. —

"Put it in my hair just here, there is no room for it below; diamonds are best on the head, and roses on the heart."

As he deftly fastened it above her white forehead, she drew out a flower broken by Yorke's unskillful hand, and tying it to the ribbon of Germain's domino, she said, —

"Wear this, else among so many black dominos I shall not know my friend, and make my confidences to wrong ears."

"Now I am prouder of my rose than you of your jewels, madame, and thank you for it heartily," he replied, surveying it with delight.

"Shall I not wear your favor, also?" asked Yorke, with extended hand. "Oh, yes, but not that one, because it does not suit you. There's rue for you, and here's some for me; but we may wear our rue with a difference."

As she quoted poor Ophelia's words, from a vase near by she gathered a flowerless sprig, and gave it to him with a glance that cut him to the heart. He took it silently, and instantly resuming her gay manner, she exclaimed, as the roll of a carriage was heard, —

"It is the Coventrys: they come early, because I asked them to play the host and hostess for an hour to increase the bewilderment of our guests, and give us greater freedom. She is to be Juno, and while she is masked, no one will suspect that it is not I. Come, Germain, let us slip away, and return later."

The rooms filled rapidly, and the mock host and hostess did the honors so well that the guests had no doubt of their identity, while the real master of the house moved among them unsuspected, watching impatiently for the arrival of the marquise and her friend. He waited long, but at last the white plumes were seen approaching, and many eyes followed the brilliant figure that entered, not on the arm of a black domino, but a young courtier in the picturesque costume of Elizabeth's time. Yorke saw at a glance that this was not Germain: who was it then? Alfred flashed into his mind, but he was across the water, and not expected

to return for months. No new-made acquaintance of Cecil's carried himself with such a gay and gallant air; for the disguise seemed to sit easily upon him, and he wore doublet and hose, velvet cloak and love locks, ruff and sword, with none of the awkwardness that most men exhibit when in costume. Nor was this all he saw to disturb him; the charming marquise leaned upon the arm of this debonnaire Sir Walter Raleigh, talking with an animation that attracted attention, while the devotion of her escort, and the grace of both, roused much curiosity concerning this striking young couple. Hamlet followed them like a shadow, but their conversation was in whispers, and they went their way as if unconscious of anything but themselves. Yorke soon met the black domino with the white rose dangling on his breast, and drew him apart to ask eagerly, —

"Who is that with Cecil?"

"I have no idea."

"Where did she meet him?"

"I cannot tell you."

"But you went away together, and were to return together: when and how did you part?"

"We went to the music-room to wait a little, but soon she sent me for her fan, which had been forgotten. I was gone some time, for the maid was busy with the ladies; when I returned madame had disappeared, and I saw no more of her till she came in with Sir Walter."

"Rude to you? That is not at all like her."

"I was to blame, if any one; she grew tired of waiting, doubtless, and, finding some friend, left me to follow her. I am glad she did, for he is a fitter escort for youth and beauty than I. They look like a prince and princess out of a fairy tale, and it does one's heart good to watch them."

Yorke made no reply, but stood motionless beside Germain, looking where he looked, for the dancing had begun, and the young pair were slowly circling round the room to the sound of music, inspiring enough to stir the coldest blood. Twice the marquise floated by, with a glance over her shoulder as she passed; but the third time she looked in vain, for the two dark figures were gone, and a splendid Cleopatra held her court in the deserted recess.

"I am out of breath; let us stroll about and hear people's comments on me and

mine; that will be amusing," she said, pausing, and her escort obeyed.

It was amusing, and something more; for as they passed through the glittering throng or mingled with the groups gathered about each statue-haunted alcove, Cecil saw and heard the wonder, admiration and reverence her husband's genius inspired. This was the first time his works had been exhibited, and there was something so romantic in the fact that these fine statues had stood unknown, unseen, till they were brought to decorate his wife's home, as if love alone could make him care for fame, that their beauty seemed increased fourfold in the spectators' eyes; and so warm were the commendations bestowed upon the marbles, so varied and beautiful the tributes paid the man, that Cecil glowed behind the mask, and was glad of that screen to hide her smiles and tears. From many lips she heard the same story, sorrow, love and fame, with endless embellishments, but always the same contrast between romance and reality for her. If he ever loved her, why so careless about Germain? What was the mystery that bound the two so closely together, with such a strange mingling of dislike and gratitude, forbearance and submission? Had she not a right to solve the secret if she could, now that her happiness depended on it? These thoughts saddened and silenced her so visibly, that her companion soon perceived it.

"Where are all your spirits gone? Have I really offended you by coming? Or do these chattering people weary you? Tell me, Cecil, and let me do my best to make you gay again," he whispered, bending till his curling locks touched her shoulder.

"Neither, Sir Walter; the heat oppresses me: so take me out into the garden, and leave me to rest, while you play the cavalier to some other lady, lest your devotion to one should give offence."

"If I submit now, I may j in you when I've done penance in a single dance, may I not? Remember how short my time is, and how much I have to say."

"You may come if you will forget the past, and think only of the future."

"I can safely promise that, for it is now the desire of my heart;" and with a curious blending of joy and regret in his voice, Sir Walter left the marquise on the broad steps that led down into the garden. Moonlight flooded the terrace, grove and flowery

paths, where changing figures wandered to and fro, or sat in the green nooks, each group making a graceful picture in that magic light. Here a troubadour sang to his guitar, as knights and ladies listened to his lay; there glided a monk or nun, sombre and silent, as if blind and deaf to the gayety about them; elves glittered in the grove; Mephistopheles followed a blonde Margaret; Louis Fourteenth and Marie Stuart promenaded with stately pace along the terrace; and Rebecca the Jewess was flirting violently with Cardinal Woolsey on the steps. Enjoying the mirth and mystery with a divided mind, Cecil wandered on, declining all courteous offers of companionship from fellow-wanderers, and came at last to a retired nook, where a rustic seat stood under a leafy arch before the little fountain that sparkled in the moonlight. Scarcely was she seated, however, before a long shadow fell across the path, and, turning, she saw a black domino behind her.

"Does madame recognize me?"

The voice was feigned, nothing but the outline of the figure was visible, and no badge distinguished this domino from a dozen others, but after a moment's pause and a brief scrutiny, Cecil seemed satisfied, and, removing her mask, exclaimed, with an air of perfect confidence, —

"It is Germain; you cannot hide yourself from me."

"Is madame sure?"

"Yes, I know you by the rapid beating of your heart. You forget that, *mon ami*."

"Does no other heart beat fast when it approaches marquise?"

"None but yours, I fancy. You have been dancing, and I bade you not: it is dangerous. Come, now, and rest with me; the music is delicious from this distance, and the night too beautiful to waste in crowded rooms."

With an inviting gesture she swept her silken train aside, that he might share the little seat, and as he took it, put up her hand to remove his mask, with the smile still shining on her face, the friendly tone still softening her voice.

"Take off that ugly thing: it impedes your breathing, and is bad for you."

But he caught the hand, and imprisoned it in both his own, while his heart-beats grew more audible, and some inward agitation evidently made it difficult to speak quietly.



"No, permit me to keep it on; I cannot show as calm a face as you tonight, so let me hide it."

Something in the touch and tone caused Cecil to look closer at the mask, which showed nothing but glittering eyes and glimpses of a black beard.

"Where is the sign that will assure me you are Germain?" she demanded.

"Here," and turning to a fold of the black domino she saw the rose still hanging as she had tied it.

"No wonder you did not care to show your badge, it is so faded. Break a fresh one from the trellis yonder, and I will place it better for you."

"Give me one from your bouquet, that is fresher and sweeter to me than any other in the garden or the world."

"Moonlight and masquerading make you romantic; I feel so too, and will make a little bargain with you, since you prize my rose so highly. You shall take your choice of these I wear if you will answer a few questions."

"Ask anything" — he began eagerly, but caught back the words, adding, "put your questions, and if I can answer them without forfeiting my word, I will, truly and gladly."

"Ah, I thought that would follow. If I forfeit my word in asking, surely you may do the same in answering. I promised Basil to control my curiosity; I have kept my promise till he broke his, now I am free to satisfy myself."

"What promise has he broken?"

"I will answer that when you have earned the rose. Come, grant my wish, and then you may question in return."

"Speak. I will do my best."

"Tell me, then, what tie binds you to Yorke?"

"The closest, yet most inexplicable."

"You are his brother?"

"No."

"He cannot be your father: that is impossible?"

"Decidedly, as there are but a few years' difference between our ages."

She heard a short laugh as this answer came, and smiled at her own foolish question.

"Then you must be akin to me, and so bound to him in some way. Is that it?"

"I am not akin to you, yet I am bound to you both, and thank God for it."

"What is the mystery? Why do you haunt me? Why does Yorke let you come? and why do I trust you in spite of everything?"

"The only key I can give you to all this is the one word, love."

She drew back, as he bent to whisper it, and put up her hand as if to forbid the continuance of the subject, but Germain said warmly, —

"It is because I love you that I haunt you. Yorke permits it because he cannot prevent it, and you trust me because your heart is empty and you long to fill it. Is not this true? I have answered your questions, now answer mine, I beg of you."

"No, it is not true."

"Then you do love?"

"Yes."

"Whom, Cecil, whom?"

"Not you, Germain, believe that, and ask no more."

"Is it a younger, comelier man than I?"

"Yes."

"And you have loved him long?"

"For years."

"He is here tonight?"

"He is. Now let us go in: I am tired of this."

"Not yet. Stay and answer me once more. You shall not go till I am satisfied. Tell me, have you no love for Yorke?"

His sudden violence terrified her, for, as she endeavored to rise, he held her firmly, speaking vehemently, and waiting her reply, with eyes that flashed behind the mask. Remembering his wild nature, and fearing some harm to Basil, she dared not answer truly, and hoping to soothe him, she laid her hand upon his arm, saying, with well-feigned coldness, —

"How can I love him, when I have been taught for years only to respect and obey him? He has been a stern master, and I never can forget my lesson. Now release me, Germain, and never let this happen again. It was my fault, so I forgive you, but there must be no more of it."

There was no need to bid him release her, for, as the words left her lips, like one in a paroxysm of speechless repentance, grief, or tenderness, he covered her hands with passionate kisses, and was gone as suddenly as he had come. Cecil lingered a moment to recover herself and re-adjust her mask; and hardly had she done so, when down the path came Hamlet, as if in search of her.

The difference between the two had never been more strongly marked than now, for Germain had been in his most impetuous mood, and Yorke seemed unusually mild and calm, as Cecil hurried toward him, with a pleasant sense of safety as she took his arm, and listened to his quiet question, —

"What has frightened you, my child?"

"Germain. He is so violent, so strange, that I can neither control nor understand him, and he must be banished, though it is hard to do it."

"Poor Germain! he suffers for the sins of others as well as for his own. But if he makes you unhappy, he shall go, and go at once. Why did you not tell me so before?"

"I did; but you said let him stay. Have you forgotten that so soon?"

Yorke laughed low to himself.

"It seems that I have forgotten. It was kind of me, however, to let him stay where he was the happiest; did you not think so, Cecil?"

"No, I thought it very unwise. I was hurt at your indifference, and tried to show you your mistake; but I have done harm to Germain, and he must go, although in him I lose my dearest friend, my pleasantest companion. I am very proud, but I humble myself to ask this favor of you, Basil."

"Gentle heart, how can he ever thank you for your compassion and affection? Be easy, he shall go; but as a last boon, give him one more happy day, and I will make sure that he shall not offend again, as he seems to have done tonight. I, too, am proud, but I humble myself, Cecil, to ask this favor of you."

So gently he spoke, so entirely changed he seemed, that Cecil's eyes filled, for her heart felt very tender, and before she could restrain it, an impulsive exclamation escaped her.

"Ah, Basil, if you were always as kind as now, how different my life would be."

"So would mine, if I dared to be kind." The answer was as impulsive as the exclamation, and he made a gesture as if to take her to himself; but something restrained him, and, with a heavy sigh, he walked on in silence.

"Dared to be kind?" she echoed in a grieved and wondering tone. "Are you afraid to show that you care for me a little?"

"Mortally afraid, because I cannot tell you all. But, thank heaven, there will come a time when I may speak, and for that hour I long, though it will be my last."

"O Basil, what do you mean by such strange words?"

"I mean that when I lie dying, I can tell my miserable mystery, and you will pity and pardon me at last."

"But you once said you would never tell me."

"Did I? Well, then, Germain shall tell you when he dies. You'll not have long to wait."

Cecil shivered at the ominous words, and started with a faint cry, for they seemed confirmed, as her eye fell on a dark figure lying with hidden face among the grass, not far from the solitary path they had unconsciously chosen. There was something so pathetic about the prostrate figure, flung down as if in the abandonment of despair, that Cecil was on the point of going to offer comfort, when her companion detained her, whispering earnestly, —

"Leave him to me, and go on alone. It is time for the unmasking, and we shall be missed. I'll follow soon, and bring him with me."

She obeyed, and went on more heavy-hearted than when she came. Within, the gaiety was at its height, and, as she entered, Sir Walter was instantly at her side, leading her away for the last dance before the masks were removed. Presently, silence fell upon the motley throng, and all stood ready to reveal themselves, when the signal came. A single horn sounded a mellow blast, and in a moment the room brightened with smiling faces, as the black masks fell, while a general peal of laughter filled the air. Cecil glanced about her for her husband and Germain. They were standing together near the door, both unmasked now, and both more mysterious to her than ever. Neither looked as she expected to see them; Yorke was grim and pale, with smileless eyes; Germain leaned near him, smiling his enchanting smile, and wearing the indescribable air of romance which always attached to him, and even now rendered him a more striking figure than many of the gayer ones about him.

"Shall I ever understand them?" she sighed to herself, as her eye turned from them to Sir Walter standing beside her, one

hand on his sword-hilt, the other still holding the half mask before his face, as if anxious to preserve his incognito as long as possible. Yorke's eye was upon him also, as he waited with intense impatience to see his suspicion confirmed; but, in the confusion of the moment, he lost sight of the marquise and her attendant before this desire was gratified. Making his way through the crowd as fast as frequent salutations, compliments and jests permitted he came at last to the balcony. A single glance assured him that his search was ended, and, stepping into the deep shadow of the projecting wall, he eyed the group before him with an eye that boded ill to the unconscious pair.

Cecil's face was toward him, and it wore a look of happiness that had long been a stranger to it, as she spoke earnestly, but in so low a tone that not a word was audible. Her companion listened intently, and made brief replies; he was unmasked now, but the long plume of his hat, drooping between his face and the observer, still prolonged the suspense. Only a few moments did they stand so, for, as if bidding him adieu, Cecil waved her hand to him, and re-entered the hall through the nearest window. Sir Walter seated himself on the wide railing of the balcony, flung his hat at his feet, and turned his face full to the light, as if enjoying the coolness of the sea-breeze. One instant he sat humming a blithe cavalier song to himself; the next, a strong hand clutched and swung him over the low balustrade, as a face, pale with passion, came between him and the moon, and Yorke's voice demanded fiercely, —

"What brings you here? Answer me truly, or I will let go my hold, and nothing but my hand keeps you from instant death."

It was true; for though Alfred's feet still clung to the bars, his only support was the arm, inflexible as iron, that held him over the rocky precipice, below which rolled the sea. But he was brave, and though his face whitened, his eye was steady, his voice firm, as he replied unhesitatingly, —

"I came to see Cecil."

"I thought so! Are you satisfied?"

"Fully satisfied."

"That she loves you as you would have her love?"

"Yes, as I would have her love."

"You dare say this to me!" and Yorke's

grip tightened, as a savage light shot into his black eyes, and his voice shot with fury.

"I dare anything! If you doubt it, try me!"

Alfred's blood was up now, and he forgot himself in the satisfaction it gave him to inflict a pang of jealousy as sharp as his own had been.

"What was she saying to you when she left?" demanded Yorke under his breath.

"I shall answer no questions and destroy no confidences," was the brief reply.

"Then I swear I will let go my hold!"

"Do it; and tell Cecil I was true to the end."

With a defiant smile, Alfred took his hands from the other's arm, and hung there only by that desperate clutch. The smile, the words, drove Yorke beyond himself; a mad devil seemed to possess him, and, in the drawing of a breath, the young man would have been dashed upon the jagged cliffs below, had not Germain saved them both. Where he came from, neither saw, nor what he did; for, with inconceivable rapidity, Yorke was flung back, Alfred drawn over the balustrade, and planted firmly on his feet again. Then the three looked at one another. Yorke was speechless with mingled rage, shame and grief warring within him; Alfred still smiling disdainfully; Germain, pale and panting with the shock of surprise at such a sight, and the sudden exertion which had spared the gay evening a tragic close. He spoke first, and as one having authority, drawing the young man with him, as he slowly retreated toward the steep steps that wound from the balcony to the cliff that partially supported it.

"Go, Bazil, and keep this from Cecil; I have a right to ask it, for half the debt to you is canceled by saving you from this act, that would have made your life as sad a failure as my own. I shall return tomorrow for the last time; till then I shall guard this boy, for you are beside yourself."

With that they left him; and he let them go without a word, feeling that indeed he was beside himself. How long he stood there he did not know; a stir within recalled him to the necessity of assuming composure, and, fighting down the agitation that must be controlled, he went in to play the courteous host at his own table, and answer to the toasts drank to the health and

happiness of himself and his fair wife. He went through with his duties with a desperate sort of gayety that deceived careless observers, but not Cecil. She, too, was feverishly restless, for Alfred did not appear, and Germain was gone also; but she hid her disquiet better than Yorke, and the effort made her so brilliantly beautiful and blithe, that the old fancy of "Yorke's statue" was forgotten, and "Yorke's wife" became "the star of the goodly companie."

The evening came to an end at last, and Yorke's long torment was over. Early birds were beginning to twitter, and the short summer night was nearly past, as the latest guest departed, leaving the weary host and hostess alone. Cecil's first act was to unclasp the diamonds and offer to restore them to the giver, saying gratefully, yet with gravity, —

"I thank you for your generous thought of me, and have tried to do honor to your gift. But please take them back now: they are too costly ornaments for me."

"Too heavy chains, you mean!" and, with a sudden gesture, he sent the glittering handful to the ground, adding in a tone that made her start, —

"Did you bring that boy here?"

"Do you mean the gallant Sir Walter?"

"I mean Alfred Norton."

"No: I did not ask him."

"You knew he was coming?"

"I only hoped so."

The dark veins rose on Yorke's forehead, he locked his hands tightly together behind him, and fixed on her a look that she never could forget, as he said slowly, as if every word was wrung from him, —

"You must see him no more. I warn you; harm will come of it if you persist."

A smile broke over her face, and with a shrug of her white shoulders, and an accent of merry malice that drove him frantic, she answered nonchalantly, —

"Why mind him more than poor Germain? If he comes I cannot shun him, unless my lord and master has turned jealous, and forbids it; does he?"

"Yes."

Yorke left the room, as he uttered the one word that was both an answer and a confession; had he looked backward, he would have seen Cecil down upon her knees gathering up the scattered diamonds, with that inexplicable smile quenched in tears, and on her face that tender expression he so longed to see.

## A MARBLE WOMAN.

BY A. M. BARNARD, AUTHOR OF "V. V., OR PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS."

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### CHAPTER IX.

#### ON THE RACK.

THE house was not astir till late next day, for master and mistress breakfasted in their own rooms at noon, and seemed in no haste to meet. A more miserable man than Yorke the sun did not shine on. Oppressed with remorse for last night's violence, shame at last night's betrayal of jealousy, and bitter sorrow for last night's defeat, he longed yet dreaded to see Cecil, feeling that all hope of winning her heart was lost, and nothing but the resignation of despair remained for him.

Fearing that Alfred might venture back, he haunted house and garden like a restless ghost, despising himself the while, yet utterly unable to resist the power that controlled him. No one came, however,—not even Germain; and the afternoon was half over before Cecil appeared. He knew the instant she left her room, for not a sound escaped him; he saw her come down into her boudoir looking so fresh and fair he found it hard to feign unconsciousness of her presence till he was composed enough to meet her as he would. The windows of her room opened on the shady terrace where he had been walking for an hour. After passing and re-passing several times, in hopes that she would speak to him, he pulled his hat low over his brows, and, looking in, bade

her "Good-morning." She answered with unusual animation, but her eye did not meet his, and she bent assiduously over her work as if to hide her varying color. Yorke was quick to see these signs of disquiet, but the thought of Alfred made him interpret them in his own way, and find fresh cause of suffering in them.

Both seemed glad to ignore last night, for neither spoke of it, though conversation flagged, and long pauses were frequent, till Yorke, in sheer desperation, took up a book, offering to read aloud to her. She thanked him, and leaning on the window ledge he opened at random and began to read. Of late, poems and romances had found their way into the house, apparently introduced by Germain, and to her surprise Yorke allowed Cecil to read them, which she did with diligence, but no visible effect as yet. In five minutes Yorke wished she had refused his offer, for the lines he had unwittingly chosen were of the tenderest sort, and he found it very hard to read the tuneful raptures of a happy lover, when his own heart was heaviest. He hurried through it as best he could, and not till the closing line was safely delivered did he venture to look at Cecil. For the first time she seemed affected by the magic of poetry; her hands lay idle, her head was averted, and her quickened breath stirred the long curls that half hid her face.

"She thinks of Alfred," groaned Yorke with a himself, and throwing down the book, he abruptly left her for another aimless saunter through the garden and the grove. He did not trust himself near her again, but lying in the grass where he could see her window, he watched her unobserved. Still seated at her embroidery frame, she worked at intervals, but often dropped her needle to look out as if longing for some one who did not come. "She waits for Alfred," sighed Yorke, and laying his head down on his arm, he fell to imagining how different all might have been had he not marred his own happiness by blindly trying to atone for one wrong with another. The air was sultry, the soft chirp of insects very soothing; the weariness of a wakeful night weighed down his eyelids, and before he was aware of its approach, a deep sleep fell upon him, bringing happier dreams to comfort him than any his waking thoughts could fashion.

A peal of thunder startled him wide awake, and glancing at his watch, he found he had lost an hour. Springing up, he went to look for Cecil, as he no longer saw her at her window. But nowhere did he find her, and after a vain search he returned to the boudoir, thinking some clew to her whereabouts might be discovered there. He did discover a clew, but one that drove him half mad with suspense and fear. Turning over the papers on her writing-table, hoping to find some little message such as she often left for him, he came upon a card bearing Alfred's name, and below it a single line in French.

"At five, on the beach. Do not fail."

Yorke's face was terrible as he read the words that to his eyes seemed a sentence of life-long desolation, for, glancing despairingly about the room, he saw that Cecil's hat was gone, and understood her absence now. A moment he stood staring at the line like one suddenly gone blind; then all the pain and passion passed into an unnatural calmness as he thrust the card into his pocket and rung like a man who has work to do that will not brook delay.

"Where is Mrs. Yorke?" was the brief question that greeted Anthony when he appeared.

"Gone to the beach, sir."

"How long ago?"

"Nearly an hour, I should say. It was half-past four when I came home; she was here then, for I gave her the note; but she went out soon after, and now it's half-past five."

"What note was that?"

"An answer to one I carried to the hotel, sir."

"To Mr. Alfred, was it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see him, Anthony?"

"Gave it into his own hand, sir, as mistress bade me, for it was important, she said."

"Very important! He answered it, you say?"

"Yes, sir. I met him on the lawn, and when he'd read the note, he just wrote something outlandish on his card and told me to hurry back. Is anything wrong, master?"

"Mrs. Yorke has gone boating with him, I believe, and I am anxious about her, for a storm is blowing up, and Mr. Alfred is no sailor. Are you sure she went that way?"

"Very sure, sir; she had her boat cloak with her, and went down the beach path. I thought she spoke to you lying under the pine, but I suppose you were asleep, so she did n't wake you."

"She stopped, did she?"

"Yes, sir, several minutes, and stooped down as if speaking to you."

"You were watching her, it seems. Why was that?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but I couldn't help it; she looked so gay and pretty it did my old eyes good to look at her."

"You may go."

The instant he was alone, Yorke caught up a delicate handkerchief that lay on a chair, and calling Judas, showed it to him with a commanding, "Find her." The dog eyed his master intelligently, smelt the bit of cambric, and with nose to the ground, dashed out of the house, while Yorke followed, wearing the vigilant, restless look of an Indian on the war-trail. Under the pine Judas passed, snuffed here and there, hurried down the path, and set off across the beach, till coming to a little cone, he seemed at fault, ran to and fro a minute, then turned his face seaward and gave a long howl as if disappointed that he could not follow his mistress by water as by land. Yorke came up breathless, looked keenly all about him, and discovered several proofs of the dog's sagacity. Cecil's veil lay on a rocky seat, large and small footprints were visible in the damp sand, and a boat had been lately drawn up in the cove, for the receding tide had not washed the mark of its keel away.

"She could not be so treacherous. She has gone with Germain. I will not doubt her yet." But as the just and generous emotion rose, his eye fell on an object which plainly proved that Alfred had been there. A gold sleeve button lay shining at his feet; he seized it, saw the initials "A. N." upon it, and doubted no longer, as the hand that held it closed with a gesture full of ominous significance, and turning sharply, he went back more rapidly than he came. Straight home he hurried, and calling Anthony, alarmed the old man as much by his

appearance as by the singular orders he gave.

"If Germain comes, tell him to wait here for me; if young Norton comes, do not admit him; if Mrs. Yorke comes, put a light in the little turret window. I am going to look for her, and shall not return till I find her, unless the light recalls me."

"Lord bless us, sir! if you're scared about mistress, let some one go with you. I'll be ready in a jiffy."

"No; I shall go alone. Get me the key of the boat-house, and do as I tell you."

"But, master, they'll put in somewhere when they see the squall coming on. Better send down to the hotel, or ride round to the Point. It's going to be a wild night, and you don't look fit to face it."

But Yorke was deaf to warnings or suggestions, and hastily preparing himself for the expedition, he repeated his orders, and left Anthony shaking his head over "master's recklessness."

As he unmoored the boat, Judas leaped in, and, standing in the bow, looked into the dim distance with an alert, intent expression, as if he shared the excitement of his companion. Up went the sail, and away flew the *Sea-Gull*, leaving a track of foam behind, and carrying with it a heart more unquiet than stormy sea or sky. Across the bay skimmed the boat, and landing on the now deserted beach, Yorke went up to the hotel so calm, externally, that few would have suspected the fire that raged within.

"Is young Norton here?" he asked of a clerk lounging in the office.

"Left this afternoon, sir."

"Rather sudden, wasn't it? Are you sure he's gone?"

"Don't know about the suddenness, Mr. Yorke, but I do know he paid his bill, sent his baggage by the 4.30 train, and said he should follow in the next."

"Did he say anything about coming over to the Cliffs?" said Yorke. "I expected him today."

"I heard nothing of it, and the last I saw of him he was going toward the beach to bid the ladies good-by I supposed."

"Thank you, Gay. I had a message for him, but I can send it by mail." And Yorke sauntered away as if his disappointment was a very trifling one. But the instant he was out of sight his pace quickened to a stride, and he made straight for the depot, cursing his ill-timed sleep as he went. Another official was soon found and questioned, but no person answering to Alfred's description had purchased a ticket; of this the man was quite sure, as very few persons had left by either of the last trains.

"Well planned for so young a head, but Judas and his master will outwit him yet," muttered Yorke between his teeth, concen-

trating all his wrath on Alfred, for he dared not think of Cecil.

Stopping at Germain's lodging, he was told that his friend had gone to town at noon, and had not yet returned. This intelligence settled one point in his mind, and confirmed his worst fear. Regardless of the gathering storm, he put off again, shaping his course for the city, led by a conviction that the lovers would endeavor to conceal themselves there for a time at least. A strange pair of voyagers went scudding down the harbor that afternoon; the great black hound, erect and motionless at the bow, though the spray dashed over him, and the boat dipped and bounded as it drove before the wind; the man, erect and motionless at the helm, one hand on the rudder and one on the sail, his mouth grimly set, and his fiery eye fixed on the desired haven with an expression which proved that an indomitable will defied both danger and defeat. Craft of all sorts were hurrying into port, and more than one belated pleasure boat crossed Yorke's track. The occupants of each were scanned with a scrutinizing glance, and once or twice he shouted an inquiry as they passed. But in none appeared the faces he sought, no answer brought either contradiction or confirmation of his fear, and no backward look showed him the welcome light burning in the little turret window. Coming at last to the wharf where they always landed, he questioned the waterman to whose care he gave his boat.

"Ay, ay, sir; this squall has sent more than one philandering young couple home in a hurry. The last came in twenty minutes ago, just in time to save the crew from more water than they bargained for."

"Did you observe them? Was the lady beautiful? the gentleman young? Did you catch the name of either? Where?"

"Drop anchor there, sir, till I overhaul the first cargo of questions," broke in the man, for Yorke was hurrying one inquiry upon the heels of another without waiting for an answer to any. "Did I observe 'em? No, I did n't, particularly. Was the lady pretty? Don't know; she was wrapped up and scared. Was the gentleman young? Not more than three-and-twenty, I should say. Did I catch their names? Not a name, being busy with the boats."

"Did they seem fond of one another? Were they in a hurry? Which way did they go?"

"Uncommon fond, and in a devil of a hurry. Which way they went I can't tell; it was no business of mine, so I did n't look. Anything more, sir?" said the man good-humoredly.

"Yes; take this for your trouble, and show me the boat they came in."

"Thanky, sir; that's it over yonder. The lad must have been half seas over with love or liquor, to bring his sweetheart all the way from the Point in a cockle-shell like that."

"From the Point? It is a hotel boat, then?"

"Ay, sir; I know 'em all, and the *Water Witch* is the worst of the lot, but her smart rigging gives her a rakish look to them that don't know a mud-scow from a wherry."

"Did the young man give you any orders about the boat?"

"Only to keep her until she was called for."

"And you have no idea which way they went?"

"No, sir; they steered straight ahead as far as the corners, but what course they took then I can't say."

Yorke was gone before the man had finished his sentence, and, with Judas at his heels, turned toward his old home, feeling little doubt but he should find the fugitives at Mrs. Norton's, close by; for, though she was absent for the summer, her house was accessible to her son. Admitting himself without noise, he searched his own premises, and from the garden reconnoitred the adjoining ones. Every window was closely shuttered; no light anywhere appeared, and the house was evidently unoccupied. Hester, when called, had heard and seen nothing of Mr. Alfred for months, and was much surprised at her master's sudden appearance, though he fabricated a plausible excuse for it. Out he went again into the storm that now raged furiously, and for several hours searched every place where there was the least possibility of finding those he sought. He looked also for Germain, hoping he might lend some help; but he was in none of his usual haunts, and no clew to the lost wife was found.

Drenched, despairing and exhausted with his fruitless quest, he stepped into a lighted doorway for shelter, while he took a moment's thought what course to pursue next. As he stood there, Ascot, the young artist, came from the billiard-room within; he had been Yorke's guest the night before, and, recognizing his host in the haggard, weather-beaten man standing in the light, he greeted him gayly.

"Good-evening, ancient mariner; you look as if your last voyage had not been a prosperous one. I can sympathize with you, for, thanks to that confounded *Water Witch*, we nearly went to the bottom in the squall this afternoon."

"The *Water Witch*?" cried Yorke, checking himself in the act of abruptly quitting Ascot, whose gayety was unbearable just then.

"Yes, I warn you against her. We came over from the Point in her, and had a narrow escape of being made 'demmed, damp, moist, unpleasant bodies,' as Mantalina says."

"This afternoon, Ascot?" he exclaimed.

"At what time?"

"Between five and six."

"Did you leave the boat at the lower wharf, where we usually land?"

"Yes; and there she may stay till doomsday, though I ought to be grateful to her, after all."

"We? then you were not alone?"

"No; my Grace was with me"—there Ascot stopped, looked half embarrassed, half relieved, but added with a frank laugh,—

"I never could keep a secret, and, as I have betrayed myself, I may as well confess that I took advantage of the storm and danger to make myself a very happy man. Give me joy, Yorke; Grace Coventry is mine."

"Joy! Your torment has but just begun." With which gloomy answer Yorke left the astonished young gentleman to console himself with love-dreams and a cigar.

"Have I lost my senses as well as my heart, that I go chasing shadows, and deluding myself with jealous fears and fancies, when perhaps there is no mystery or wrong but what I conjure up?" mused Yorke, as he crossed the deserted park, intent upon a new and hopeful thought. Having made one mistake, he began to believe that he had made another, and wasted time and strength in looking for what had never been lost. Weariness calmed him now, the rain beating on his uncovered head cooled the fever of his blood, and the new hope seemed to brighten as he cherished it.

"I'll go back and wait; perhaps she has already come, or tidings of her. Anything is better than this terrible suspense," he said, and set about executing his design in spite of all obstacles.

It was nearly midnight now, too dark and wild to think of returning by water, and the last train had left; but only a few miles lay between him and home, and neither weariness nor tempest could deter him. Soon mounted on a powerful horse, he was riding swiftly through the night, recalling legends of the Wild Huntsman to the few belated travelers who saw the dark horseman dash by them, with the dark hound following noiselessly behind. The storm was in accordance with his mood, and he liked it better than a summer night, though the gusts buffeted him, and the rain poured down with unabated violence. At the first point where the cliffs were visible, he reined up and strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of the light that should assure him of Cecil's



safety. But a thick mist obscured land and sea, and no cheering ray could pierce the darkness. A mile nearer, his eye was gladdened by the sight of a pale gleam high above the lower lights that glimmered along the shore. Brighter and brighter it grew as he approached, and soon, with a thrill of joy that made his heart leap, he saw that it shone clear and strong from the little turret window. An irrepressible shout broke from his lips as he galloped up the steep road, leaped the gate, and burst into the hall before man or maid could open for him.

"Where is she?" he cried in a voice that would have assured the wanderer of a tender welcome had she been there to hear and answer it.

Anthony started from a restless doze in his chair, and shook his gray head as he eyed his master pitifully.

"She a'n't here, sir, but we've had news of her; so I lit the lamp to bring you home."

Yorke dropped into a seat as if he had been shot, for, with the loss of his one hope, all strength seemed to desert him, and he could only look at Anthony with such imploring yet despairing eyes, that the old man's hard face began to work as he said below his breath, —

"After you'd gone, sir, I went down to the Point and staid round there till dark. Just as I was coming away, old Joe came in bringing a sail he'd picked up half way down the harbor. There were several of us standing about the pier, and naturally we asked questions. Then it came out from one and another that the sail belonged to the boat Mr. Alfred took this afternoon. He left there alone, but one of the men saw him with a lady afterward, and by his description I knew it was mistress."

Yorke covered up his face as if he knew what was coming, and had not courage to meet it; but soon he said brokenly, "Go on;" and Anthony obeyed.

"The man was n't quite sure about Mr. Alfred, as he don't know him, and did n't mind him much; but he was sure of mistress, and could swear to the boat and sail, for he helped rig it, and his sweetheart made the streamer. I'd like to think he was wrong; but as Mr. Alfred hired the boat, and the dear lady was seen in it, I'm awfully afraid they were wrecked in the squall."

How still the house seemed as the words dropped slowly from Anthony's lips. Nothing stirred but poor Judas panting on the mat, and nothing broke the silence but the soft tick of a clock and the sobbing of the wind without. Yorke had laid down his head as if he never cared to lift it up again, and sat motionless in an attitude of utter despair, while the old servant stood

respectfully silent, with tears rolling down his withered cheeks, for his gentle mistress had won his heart, and he mourned for her as for a child of his own.

Suddenly Yorke looked up and spoke.

"Have you sent any one to look for them?"

"Yes, master, long ago, and" —

"What is it? You keep something back. Out with it, man; I can bear anything but suspense."

"They found the boat, and it was empty, master."

"Where was it? Tell me all, Anthony."

"Just outside the little bay, where the gale would blow hardest and the tide run strongest. The mast was broke short off, the boat half full of water, and one broken oar still hung in the rowlock, but there was no signs of any one except this."

Turning his face away, Anthony offered a little silken scarf, wet, torn and stained, but too familiar to be mistaken. Yorke took it, looked at it with eyes out of which light and life seemed to have died, then put it in his breast, and, turning to the faithful hound, said in a tone more pathetic for its calmness, —

"Come, Judas; we went together to look for her alive, now let us go together and look for her dead."

Before Anthony could detain him, he had flung himself into the saddle and was gone. All that night he haunted the shores, looking long after others had relinquished the vain search, and morning found him back in the city inquiring along the wharves for tidings of the lost.

Taking his own boat, he turned homeward at last, feeling that he could do no more; for the re-action had begun, and he was utterly spent. The storm had passed, the dawn was breaking beautifully in the east; the sea was calm, the sky cloudless; the wind blew balmily, and the sea-gulls floated along a path of gold as the sun sent its first shaft of light over the blue waste. A strange sense of peace came to the lonely man after that wild night of tempest and despair. The thought of Cecil, quiet, underneath the sea, was more bearable than the thought of Cecil happy with another; for, in spite of repentance and remorse, he could not accept his punishment from Alfred's hand, and clung to the belief that she was dead, trying to find some poor consolation for his loss in the thought that life was made desolate by death, not by treachery. So, sailing slowly through the rosy splendor of a summer dawn, he came among the cluster of small islands that lay midway between the city and the little bay. Some were green and fair, some were piles of barren rocks; none were inhabited, but on one still stood a rude hut, used as a tempo-

rary shelter for pleasure parties or such fishermen as frequented the neighborhood. Yorke saw nothing of the beauty all about him; his eyes were fixed upon the white villa that once was home; his mind was busy with memories of the past, and he was conscious of nothing but the love that had gone down into that shining sea. Judas was more alert, for, though sitting with his head on his master's knee, as if trying to comfort him by demonstrations of mute affection, he caught sight of a little white flag, fluttering from the low roof of the hut, and leaped up with a bound that nearly took him overboard. The motion roused Yorke, and, following the direction of the dog's keen eye, he saw the signal, — saw, also, a woman, wrapped in a dark cloak, sitting in the doorway with her head upon her knees as if asleep.

In an instant both dog and man were trembling with excitement, for there was something strangely familiar about the cloak, the bent head with its falling hair, the slender hands folded one upon another. Like one inspired with sudden life, Yorke plied his oars with such energy that a few vigorous strokes sent the boat high upon the pebbly shore; and leaping up the bank, while Judas followed baying with delight, he saw the figure start to its feet, and found himself face to face with Cecil.

## CHAPTER X.

### AT LAST.

WHILE Yorke slept the previous afternoon, Cecil met Alfred on the beach, talked with him for half an hour, and when he left her hastily, she stood waving her hand till he was out of sight; then she looked about her as if in search of some one, and her face brightened as she saw Germain approaching.

"I am glad you have come," she said, "for I was just trying to find a man to take this boat home, and here I find a gentleman. Alfred came in it, but delayed so long that he had only time to run across the cliffs and catch the train. Will you ferry me over to the Point, and add another favor to the many I already owe you?"

"Nothing would please me better, but, instead of landing so soon, let me take you down below the light-house, as I promised you I would. This will be my only opportunity, for I go away tomorrow, and you know you said I should have one more happy day."

"Did Basil tell you that?" asked Cecil, looking disturbed, as his words recalled last night's adventures.

"No, but I am well aware that I trouble

you, — that you wish me gone; and I shall obey: but give me this last pleasure, for I may never come again."

The smile he gave her was both melancholy and submissive; she longed to bid him stay, but dared not, yet remembering Basil's wish that she should bear with him a little longer, she was glad to grant it, for she felt her power over this man, and feared nothing for herself. A moment's hesitation, then she went toward the boat, saying, in her friendliest tone, —

"I trust you, and you shall have your pleasure; but, believe me, if I wish you gone it is for your own sake, not mine."

"I know it. I am grateful for your pity, and I will not disturb your confidence by any violence. Indeed, I think I'm done with my old self, and grow quieter as the end approaches."

Cecil doubted that, as she remembered the scene before the fountain, but Germain was certainly his gentlest self now, and as they sailed across the bay before the freshening wind, she felt the hour full of real rest and enjoyment despite her care. Absorbed in animated conversation, and unconscious of the lapse of time, they glided past the Point, the pleasant islands, the city with its cloud of smoke, the light-house on its lonely rock, and were floating far down the harbor, when the growling of distant thunder recalled them from the delights of a musical discussion to the dangers of an impending storm. A bank of black clouds was piled up in the west, the wind came in strong gusts, the waves rolled in long swells, and sea and sky portended a summer squall.

"How careless I have been," exclaimed Germain, looking anxiously about him. "But I fancy we need fear nothing except a drenching, for it will take some time to return in the teeth of this gale. Wrap your cloak about you and enjoy the fine sight, while I do my best to atone for my forgetfulness."

Cecil had no fear, for Germain was a skillful boatman, and she loved to watch the grand effects of light and shade as the thunderous clouds swept across the sky, blotting out the blue, and making the water sombre with their shadows. An occasional flash seemed to rend the dark wall, but no rain fell, and by frequent tacking Germain was rapidly decreasing the distance between them and home. Safely past the city they went, for Cecil would not land there lest Yorke should be alarmed at her long absence, and as the storm still delayed, she hoped to reach shelter before it broke.

"Once past the islands and we are safe, for the little bay is quiet, and we can land at any point if the storm begins. A few minutes more of this rough work, and we

can laugh at the gale. Bend your head, please, I must tack again, else"—

The rest of the sentence was lost in a crash of thunder like the report of a cannon, as a fierce gust swept down upon them, snapping the slender mast like a bulrush, carrying Germain overboard wrapped in the falling sail. With a cry of horror Cecil sprang up, eager, yet impotent, to save either herself or him; but in a moment he appeared, swimming strongly, cleared away the wreck of the sail, righted the boat and climbed in, dripping, but unhurt.

"Only another of my narrow escapes. I'm surely born to die quietly in my bed, for nothing kills me," he said coolly, as he brushed the wet hair from his eyes, and took breath.

"Thank Heaven! you are safe. Land anywhere, for now the sail is gone we must not think of reaching home," cried Cecil, looking about her for the nearest shore.

"We will make for the lower island; the storm will not last long, and we can find shelter there. Unfortunate that I am, to make my last day one of danger and discomfort to you."

"I like it, and shall enjoy relating my adventures when we are at home. Let me row, it is too violent exercise for you," she said as he drew out the oars and took off his coat.

"It will not hurt me; or, if it does, what matter? I would gladly give my life to see you safe."

"No, no, you must not do it. Let the boat drift or give me an oar; I am strong; I fear nothing; let me help you, Germain?"

"Take the rudder, then, and steer for the island; that will help me, and the sight of you will give me strength for a short tussle with the elements."

Cecil changed her seat, and with her hand upon the helm, her steady eyes upon the green spot before them, sat smiling at the storm, so fair and fearless that the sight would have put power into any arm, courage into any heart. For a time it seemed to inspire Germain, and he pulled stoutly against wind and tide; but soon, to his dismay, he felt his strength deserting him, each stroke cost a greater effort, each heart-beat was a pang of pain. Cecil watched the drops gather on his forehead, heard his labored breathing, and saw him loosen the ribbon at his throat, and more than once dash water over his face, alternately deeply flushed and deadly pale. Again and again she implored him to desist, to let her take his place or trust to chance for help, rather than harm himself by such dangerous exertion. But to all entreaties, suggestions and commands, he answered with a gentle but inflexible denial, an utter disregard of self, and looks of silent love that Cecil never could forget.

The rain fell now in torrents, the gale steadily increased, and the waves were white foam as they dashed high against the rocky shore of the island which the little boat was struggling to reach. Nearer and nearer it crept, as Germain urged it on with the strength of desperation, till, taking advantage of a coming billow, they were carried up and left upon the sand, with a violence that nearly threw them on their faces. Cecil sprang out at once; Germain leaned over the broken oars, panting heavily, as if conscious of nothing but the suffering that racked him. Her voice roused him, but only to fresh exertion, for, seizing her hand, he staggered up the bank, flung open the door of the hut, and dropped down at her feet, as if in truth he had given his life to save her. For a moment she was in despair; she ran out into the storm, called, waved her handkerchief, and looked far and near, hoping some passing boat might bring help. But nothing human was in sight; the nearest point of land was inaccessible, for the ebbing wave had washed the boat away, and she was utterly alone with the unconscious man upon the barren island. She had a brave spirit, a quick wit, and these were her supporters now, as, forgetting her own fears, she devoted herself to her suffering comrade. Fortunately her viniagrette was in her pocket, and water plentiful; using these simple remedies with skill, the deathlike swoon yielded at last, and Germain revived. With the return of consciousness he seemed to remember her situation before his own, and exert himself to lighten its discomforts by feeble efforts to resume his place as protector. As soon as he had breath enough to speak, he whispered with a re-assuring glance,—

"Do not be afraid, I will take care of you. The pain has gone for this time, and I shall be better soon."

"Think of yourself, not me. If I only had a fire to dry and warm you I should be quite happy and content," answered Cecil, looking round the gloomy place that darkened momentarily.

With the courtesy as native to him as his impetuosity, Germain tried to rise as he took out a little case and pointed toward a corner of the hut.

"You need a fire more than I; here are matches, there is wood; help me a little, and you shall be 'quite happy and content.'"

But as he spoke the case dropped from his hand, and he fell back with a sharp pang that warned him to submit.

"Lie still and let me care for you; I like to do it, and the exercise will keep me warm. Here is wood enough to last all night, and with light and heat we shall be very comfortable till morning and help comes."

With the heartiness of a true woman, when compassion stirs her, Cecil fell to work, and soon the dark hut glowed with a cheery blaze, the wooden shutter was closed, excluding wind and rain; the straw scattered here and there was gathered into a bed for Germain, and with her cloak over him he lay regarding her with an expression that both touched and troubled her, so humble, grateful and tender was it. When all was done, she stepped to the door, thinking she heard the sound of passing oars; nothing appeared, however, but as she listened on the threshold Germain's voice called her with an accent of the intensest longing.

"Do not leave me! Come back to me, my darling, and let nothing part us any more."

She thought he was wandering, and gave no answer but a soothing, —

"Hush! rest now, poor Germain."

"Never that again; call me father, and let me die happy in my daughter's arms."

"Father!" echoed Cecil, as a thrill of wonder, joy and blind belief shook her from head to foot.

"Yes, I may claim you at last, for I am dying. Let your heart speak; come to me, my little Cecil, for as God lives I am your father."

He struggled up, spread wide his arms, and called her in a tone of tenderness that would have carried conviction to the most careless listener. Cecil's heart did speak; instinct was quicker than memory or reason. In an instant she understood the attraction that led her to him, owned the tender tie that bound them, and was gathered to her father's bosom, untroubled by a doubt or fear. For a time there were only broken exclamations, happy tears and demonstrations of delight, as father and daughter forgot everything but the re-union that gave them back to one another. Soon Cecil calmed herself for his sake, made him lay down again, and while she dried his hair and warmed his cold hands in her own, she began to question eagerly.

"Why was I never told of this before?" she sorrowfully said, regretting the long years of ignorance that had deferred the happiness which made that hour so bright in spite of darkness and danger.

"My life depended upon secrecy, and this knowledge would have been no joy, but a shame and sorrow to you, my poor child."

"Mamma always told me that you died when I was a baby; did she believe it?"

"No, she knew I was alive, but in one sense I did die to her and all the world, for a convict has no country, home, or friends."

"A convict!" And Cecil shrank involun-

tarily; he saw it, but clung to her, saying imploringly, —

"Hear me before you cast me off. Try to pity and forgive me, for, with all his sins, your father loves you better than his life."

"I do not cast you off, — I will love, pity, and forgive; believe this, and trust your daughter, now that she is yours again."

Cecil spoke tenderly, and tried to reassure him with every affectionate demonstration she could devise, for the one word "father" had unlocked her heart, and all its pent-up passion flowed freely now that a natural vent was found. Lynig with her hand in his, August Stein told the story of the past, and Cecil learned the secret of her father's and her husband's life.

"Dear, nineteen years ago, Basil and your mother were betrothed. The gifted young man was a fit mate for the beautiful girl, and but for me they might have been a happy pair this day. In an evil hour I saw her, loved her, and resolved to win her in spite of every obstacle, for my passions ruled me, and opposition only made me the more resolute and reckless. I used every art to dazzle, captivate and win her, even against her will, and I succeeded; but the brief infatuation was not love, and though she fled with me, she soon discovered that her heart still clung to Basil. Well it might, for, though we had wronged him deeply, he took no revenge and would have helped us in our sorest strait. We were not happy, for I led a wild life, and your mother longed for home. Her father disowned her when our secret marriage was discovered, her friends deserted her, and for a year we wandered from place to place, growing poorer and more wretched as hope after hope failed. I had squandered my own fortune, and had no means of earning a livelihood except my voice. That had won me my wife, and I tried to sing my way to competence for her sake. To do this I was obliged to leave her; I always did so reluctantly, for the birth of my little daughter made the mother dearer than before. Cecil always remember that I loved you both with all the fervor of an undisciplined nature, and let that fact lighten your condemnation of what follows."

"I shall remember, father."

"Coming home unexpectedly, one day, I found Basil there. He had discovered us, and, seeing our poverty, generously offered help. I should have thanked and honored him for that, but, knowing that he did it for Cecelia's sake, I hated and distrusted him, refused his kindness, and forbade him the house. He bore with me, promised your mother that he would befriend her, and went away hoping I would relent when I was calmer. His nobleness made my own conduct seem more base; the knowledge that

my wife reproached me for destroying her happiness wounded me deeply; and the thought that Basil saw my failure, and pitied me, rankled in my heart, and made me miserable. I had been brooding darkly over these things as I returned from my distasteful work a night or two later, and was in a desperate mood. As I entered quietly, I saw a man bending over the cradle where my baby lay. I thought it was Basil, my wrath rose hot against him; some devil goaded me to it, and I felled him with a single blow. But when the light shone on his dead face I saw that it was not Basil, but the young surgeon who had saved both wife and child for me."

There was a long pause, broken only by Stein's fluttering breath and Cecil's whisper,—

"Do not go on; be quiet and forget."

"I cannot be quiet nor forget until I tell you everything. I was tried, sentenced to imprisonment for life, and for ten years was as dead to the world as it I had laid in my grave. I raged and pined like a savage creature in my prison, made many desperate attempts to escape, and at last succeeded. I left Australia, and after wandering east and west, a homeless vagabond for two weary years, I ventured back to England, hoping to learn something of my wife, as no tidings had reached me in all those years. I could not find her and dared not openly inquire; Yorke tells me she concealed herself from every one, accepted nothing even from him, but devoted herself to you, and waited patiently till it pleased Heaven to release her."

"Poor mamma! now I know how heavy her burden must have been, and why she longed to lay it down."

"Child, she did not find it half so heavy as I found mine, nor long to lay it down as bitterly as I have longed for eighteen years. If she had loved me it would have saved us both, for affection can win and hold me as nothing else has power to do. It has done much for me already, because, since I knew you, my darling, I have learned to repent, and, for your sake, to atone, as far as may be, for my wasted life."

"It is very sweet to hear you say that, father, and to feel that I have helped you, even unconsciously. Now leave the sorrowful past, and tell me how you found Basil and myself."

"Growing bold, after two years of safety, I ventured to inquire for Yorke, thinking that he could tell me something of your mother. He had left Germany, where we first met, and had gone to America. I followed, and found him leading the solitary life you know so well. He was so changed I hardly recognized him; I was still more altered, and, trusting to the disguise which

had baffled keener eyes than his, I offered myself as a model, feeling curiously drawn to him as the one link between Cecilia and myself. He accepted my services, and paid me well, for I was very poor; he pitied me; knowing only that I was a lonely creature like himself, and so generously befriended me that I could not harden my heart against him; but overpowered by remorse and gratitude I betrayed myself, and put my life into his hands, only asking to see or hear of my wife. He knew nothing of her then, but, with a magnanimity that bound me to him forever, he kept my secret, and endeavored to forgive the wrong which he never could entirely forget."

"O Basil, so generous, so gentle, why did I not know this sooner, and thank you as I ought?"

The tender words were drowned in sudden tears, as Cecil hid her face, weeping with mingled self-reproach and joy over each revelation that showed her something more to love and honor in her husband. But she soon dried her tears to listen, for her father hurried on as if anxious to be done.

"I saw you, my child, the night you came, and was sure you were mine, you were so like your mother. I implored Basil to let me have you, when I knew that she was gone; but he would not, having promised to guard you from me, and never let your life be saddened by the knowledge of your convict father. He has kept that promise sacredly, and bound me to an equal silence, under penalty of betrayal if I break it, except as I do now, when I have nothing more to fear. He let me see you secretly, when you slept, or walked, or were busy at your work, for he had not the heart to deny me that. Ah! Cecil, you never knew how near I often was to you; never guessed what right I had to love you, nor how much I longed to tell you who I was. More than once I forgot myself, and would have broken my word at any cost, but something always checked me in time, and Basil's patience was long-suffering. The night he let me see and sing to you did me more good than years of prison life, for you unconsciously touched all that was best in me, and, by the innocent affection that you could not control, made that hour more beautiful and precious than I can tell you. Since then, whether near or absent, gloomy or gay, I have regarded you as my saving angel, and tried in my poor way to be more worthy of you, and earn a place in your memory when I am gone."

Such love and gratitude shone in his altered face that Cecil could only lay her head upon his shoulder, praying that he might be spared for a longer, better life, and a calmer death at last. Soon her father spoke again,

smiling the old sweet smile, as he caressed the beautiful head that leaned against him as if its place were there.

"Did my little girl think me a desperate lover, with my strange devices to attract and win her? Basil told me that I frightened you, and I tried to control myself; but it was so hard to stand aside and see my own child pass me like a stranger, that I continually forgot your ignorance, and betrayed how dear you were to me. What did you think of that mysterious Germain?"

"What could I think but that he loved me? How could I dream that you were my father when all my life I had believed you dead? Even now I almost doubt it, you are so young, so charming and light-hearted when you please."

"I am past forty, Cecil, and what I am is only the shadow of what I was, a man endowed with many good gifts; but all have been wasted or misused, owing to a neglected education, a wayward will, an impetuous nature, and a sanguine spirit, which has outlived disgrace and desolation, suffering and time."

"And this is the mystery that has perplexed me for so long. I think you might have told me as well as Basil, and let me do my part to make you happy, father."

"I longed to do so, and assured him that we might trust you; but he would not break his promise to your mother. It was wise, though very hard to bear. I was not a fit guardian for a beautiful girl like mine, and I knew it; yet I wanted you, and made his life a burden to him by my importunity. Love him, Cecil, love him faithfully, for he has spared you much sorrow, and through you has saved your father."

She did not answer; but, looking into her face, he was satisfied. Thus opening their hearts to one another, the night wore on, yet neither found it long; and when at last Stein slept, exhausted, Cecil sat beside him, thinking happy thoughts, while the wind raved without, the rain beat on the low roof, the sea thundered round the island, and Yorke went searching for her far and wide.

Morning dawned at last, and, as her father still slept, she opened the little window, that the balmy air might refresh him, put up her signal of distress, and sat down to watch and wait. The sound of hurrying feet roused her from her reverie, and, looking up, she saw her husband coming toward her, so changed and haggard that her joy turned to fear. Dreading to excite her father, she instantly glanced over her shoulder, and barred the entrance with her extended arm. Her gesture, her expression, instantly arrested Yorke, and, while Judas fawned delightedly about her feet, he stood apart, with the sad certainty that she was not alone, to mar his joy at finding her.

"Is he there?" was his first question, sternly put.

"Yes; he is ill and sleeping; you must not disturb him. Blame me, if you will, but he shall be left in peace."

She spoke resolutely, and closed the door between them and the sleeper, keeping her place upon the threshold, as if ready to defend him; for Yorke's manner alarmed her even more than his wild appearance. The action seemed to affect him like an insult; he seized her arm, and holding it in a painful grasp, eyed her almost fiercely, as he said, with a glance that made her tremble,—

"Then you did leave me sleeping, and go away with this man, to be wrecked here, and so be discovered?"

"Yes; why should I deny it?"

"And you love him, Cecil?"

"With all my heart and soul, and you can never part us any more."

As she answered, with a brave, bright smile, and a glad voice, she felt Yorke quiver as if he had received a blow, saw his face whiten, and heard an accent of despair in his voice, when he said slowly,—

"You will leave him, if I command it?"

"No; he has borne enough. I can make him happy, and I shall cling to him through everything, for you have no right to take me from him."

"No right?" ejaculated Yorke, loosening his hold, with a bewildered look.

"None that I will submit to, if it parts us. You let me know him, let me learn to love him, and now, when he needs me most, you would take me from him. Basil, you have been very generous, very kind to both of us, and I am truly grateful; but while he lives I must stay with him, because I have promised."

He looked at her with a strange expression at first, as if he felt his senses going; then he seemed to find a clew to her persistency. A bitter laugh escaped him, but his voice betrayed wounded pride and poignant sorrow.

"I understand now; you intend to hold me to my bond, and see in me nothing but your guardian. You are as ignorant as headstrong, if you think this possible. I gave up that foolish delusion long ago, and tried to show you a truer, happier tie. But you were blind and would not see, deaf and would not hear, hard-hearted and would not relent."

"You bade me be a marble woman, with no heart to love you; only grace and beauty, to please your eye and do you honor. Have I not obeyed you to the letter?"

Coldly and quietly she spoke, yet kept her eyes on the ground, her hand on her breast, as if to hold some rebellious emotion in check. As the soft voice re-echoed the words spoken long ago, all that scene came

back to Yorke, and made the present moment doubly hard to bear.

"You have, you have! God forgive me for the wrong I did you. I tried to atone for it, but I have failed, and this is my punishment."

He spoke humbly, despairingly, and his proud eyes filled as he turned his face to hide the grief he was ashamed to show. Cecil stood with bent head, and face half hidden by her falling hair; but though she trembled, she compelled voice and features to obey her with the ease which long practice had made second nature.

"If you had cared to teach me a gentler lesson, I would have gladly learned it; but you did not, and having done your best to kill love in my heart, you should not reproach me if you are disappointed now, or wonder that I turn to others for the affection without which none of us can live."

"I will not reproach; I do not wonder: but I cannot give you up. Cecil, there is still time to relent, and to return; let me tell you how hard I have tried to make you love me, in spite of my own decree, and perhaps my patience, my penitence, may touch your heart. I will not urge my right as husband, but plead as lover. Will you listen?"

"Yes."

Cecil stole a glance at him as she spoke, and a curious smile touched her lips, though she listened with beating heart to words poured out with the rapidity of strong emotion.

"When you came to me, I kept you because you were like your mother, whom I loved, and who deserted me. That loss embittered my whole nature, and I resolved to make your life as loveless as my own. It seemed a small atonement for a great wrong, and believing that it was just to visit the sins of the parents upon the children, I carried out my purpose with a blind persistency that looks like madness to me now. But the sentiment I had forsworn revenged itself upon me, and while trying to cheat you of love, it crept into my own heart, and ruled me like a tyrant. Unconsciously I loved you long before I knew it. That was why I disliked Alfred, why I was so willing to marry you, and why I was so disappointed when others found in you the same want that I felt, yet would not own. The night I watched beside you, fearing you would never wake, I found the key to my own actions, saw my delusion, and resolved to conquer it."

He paused for breath, but Cecil did not speak, though the hidden face brightened, and the heart fluttered like a caged bird.

"I could not conquer it, for it was my master. You can never know how hard I tried, how rebellious my pride was, nor how firm my purpose; but all failed, and I was

forced to own that my happiness, my peace, depended upon you. Then I determined to undo my six years' work, to teach you how to love, and make my wife mine in heart as in name. I gave myself wholly to the task of winning you; I studied your tastes, gratified your whims, and tried every art that can attract a woman. You were tired of the old home, and I gave you a new one; you enjoyed Germain's society, and I let him come, in defiance of my better judgment; you had some pride in my talent, for your sake I displayed it; you loved pleasure, and I labored to supply it freely; I even tried to lure you with splendor, and bribe you with diamonds. But I had lost my skill, and all my efforts were in vain; for no veritable marble woman could have received my gifts more coldly or ignored my unspoken love more utterly than you. One smile like those you daily gave Germain would have repaid me, but you never shed it over me, one frank word or affectionate look would have brought me to your feet; but all the compassion, confidence and tenderness were given to others; for me you had only indifference, gratitude and respect. Cecil, I have suffered one long torment ever since I married you, longing for my true place, yet not daring to claim it, lest I should rouse aversion and not love."

Still with her head bent, her face hidden, and her hand upon her heart, she stood, and Yorke went on, more passionately than before.

I know that I have forfeited my right to expect affection or demand obedience, but I implore you to forget this infatuation, and retrieve this rash step. You do not know what you are doing; for this will mar your whole life, and make mine worthless. Cecil, come back to me, and let me try again to win you! I will work and wait for years, will be your servant, not your master, will bear and suffer anything, if I may hope to touch your heart at last. Is this impossible? Do you love Alfred more than reputation, home or husband?"

"I never have loved Alfred."

"Then who, in God's name, is this man to whom you will cling through every-thing?"

"My father."

She looked up now, and turned on him a face so full of hope and joy, that he stood dumb with astonishment as she drew nearer and nearer with outstretched hands, beaming eyes and tender voice.

"O Basil! I know all; the past is forgiven, your long labor and atonement are over, and there is no need for you to work or wait, because my heart always has been yours."

If the dead Cecelia had come to him in the youthful guise she used to wear, it

would not have more amazed and startled him than did these words from his wife's lips, and not till he felt her clinging to him so trustfully, so tenderly, did he fully realize his happiness.

"What does it mean? Why keep this from me so long? Did you not see I loved you, Cecil?"

"It means that I, too, tried to conquer myself, and failed. Till very lately, I was not sure you loved me, and I could not bear to be repulsed again."

"Ah, there is the thorn that has vexed you! You are a true woman, in spite of all my training, and you could not forget that hour, so I had to suffer till you were appeased. Is it possible that my innocent, artless girl could lay such plots, and wear a mask so long, that she might subdue her guardian's proud heart?"

"Everything is possible to a woman when she loves, and you were only conquered with your own weapons, Basil. Let me make my confession, now, and you shall see that you have not suffered, worked, and waited, all alone. When you bade me renounce love, I found it very hard to kill the affection that had grown warmer than you chose to have it. But I did my best to seem what you desired me to be, and your lessons of self-control stood me in good stead. I chilled and hardened myself rigorously; I forced myself to be meek, cold, and undemonstrative to you, whatever I might be to others; I took opium, that I might forget my pain, and feign the quietude I could not feel; and I succeeded beyond my hopes. When you asked me to marry you I was half prepared for it, because Alfred insisted that you loved me. I wished to believe it; I wanted to stay, and would have frankly owned how dear you were to me, if you had not insisted upon offering me protection, but no love. That night I resolved to show you your mistake, to prove to you that you had a heart, and teach you a better lesson than any you had taught your pupil."

"You have done so, little dearest, and I am your scholar henceforth. Teach me gently, and I will study all my days. What more, Cecil?"

"I found it very hard to resist when you grew so kind, and should have been sure you loved me, but for Germain. Why you let him come, and showed no displeasure at my delight in his society, was so inexplicable to me that I would not yield till I was satisfied. Last night my father told me all, and if anything could make you dearer, it would be the knowledge of the great debt we owe you. My generous, patient husband, how can I thank you as I ought?"

He showed her how, and for several minutes they stood in the sunshine, very silent, very happy, while the waves broke softly on

the shore, as if all storms had passed away forever. Yorke spoke first:—

"One thing more, Cecil, lest I forget it, for this sudden happiness has turned my brain, I think, and nothing is clear to me but that you are mine. What does this mean?" and drawing out the card, he held it before her eyes, with some anxiety dimming the brightness of his own.

She took it, tore it up, and as the white shreds went flying away on the wind, she said, smiling,—

"Let all your jealous fears go with them, never to come back again. What a miserable night you must have had, if you believed that I had left you for Alf."

"An awful night, Cecil," and he told her all his wanderings and his fears.

"I will not say that you deserved it for harboring such a thought, because you have suffered enough, and it is much sweeter to forgive than to reproach. But you must promise never to be jealous any more, not even of 'poor Alf.'"

The happy-hearted laugh he had so longed to hear gladdened his ear, as she looked up at him with the arch expression that made her charming.

"I'll try," he answered meekly; "but keep him away till I am very sure you love me, else I shall surely fling him into the sea, as I nearly did the night Sir Walter and the marquise tormented me. Why did he come? and why did you meet him yesterday?"

"He came to tell me that he had replaced my image with a more gracious one, for when he heard that I was married, he cast me off, and found consolation in his pretty cousin's smiles. His was a boyish love, ardent, but short-lived, and he is happy now, with one who loves him as I never could have loved. Hearing of our masque, he planned to come in disguise, and tell his story as a stranger, that he might the better watch its effect on me. But I knew him instantly, and we enjoyed mystifying those about us, till I forgot him in my own mystification. You did not wish him to come again, so I wrote to him, saying good-by, and begging him to go at once. The disobedient boy had more to tell me, and sent word he should be on the beach at five. I knew he would come to the house unless I met him, and fearing a scene—for you had grown very tragic, dear—I went. He delayed so long that he had only time to hurry across to the lower depot for the last train, leaving his boat to father and myself."

"What misery the knowledge of this would have spared me! Why did you not tell me, when we were together yesterday, that Alfred had forgotten you?"

"I meant to do so, but you gave me no opportunity, for you were so restless and strange I was half afraid of you. Besides,



since you had confessed jealousy, I hoped you would confess love also, and I waited, thinking it would come."

"How could I own it, when you had confessed that you loved a younger man than I, and my eyes were blinded by Alfred's silence and your own?"

"I did not tell you that it was my father. Did he betray me?"

She looked perplexed, and Yorke half ashamed, as he confessed another proof of his affection.

"It was I, Cecil, who came to you in the garden, who questioned you, and was stabbed to the heart by your answers. Good heavens, how blind I've been."

"Never reproach me with treachery, after that. Why did you change dresses? To try me?"

"Yes; and as you sat there so near me, so gentle, frank, and beautiful, I found it al-

most impossible to sustain my character; but I knew if I revealed myself you would freeze again, and all the charm be gone. Heaven knows I was a miserable man that night, for you disappointed me, and Alfred drove me half mad; but your father saw my folly, and saved me from myself. God bless him for that!"

"Yes; God bless him for that, and for saving me to be your happy wife. Come now, and wake him; he has been very ill, and needs care."

They went, and kneeling by him, Cecil called him gently, but he did not answer; and taking her into his arms, her husband whispered tenderly,—

"Dear, he will never wake again."

Never again in this world, for the restless heart was still at last, and the sunshine fell upon a face of such reposeful beauty, that it was evident the long sleep had painlessly deepened into death.